

From Our Dietitian:

Dark Chocolate: Good for Your Heart

Although dark chocolate can be enjoyed all year long, what a great time of the year to treat yourself and your valentine to a treat that is good for your heart (as well as your brain and circulation). Dark chocolate contains a high level of the main antioxidant flavonoid (flavonol) that is present in cocoa and chocolate. This is what separates it from other varieties of chocolate which have much lower levels. Dark chocolate also contains higher amounts of cocoa solids with smaller amounts of sugar compared to milk chocolate. However, although not conclusive, the very latest research on milk chocolate is suggesting that milk chocolate also provides valuable nutrients which lower the chances of heart problems.

Studies have demonstrated dark chocolate having a protective effect against cardiovascular disease by lowering LDL (bad) cholesterol, raising HDL (good) cholesterol and lowering blood pressure. Consumption of dark chocolate has also been shown to lower C Reactive protein levels which is a marker for inflammation in the body and now believed to be a contributor for heart disease. When consumed, cocoa flavonols are absorbed and accumulate in areas of the brain involved with memory and learning. A 2013 study showed a link suggesting long term flavonol consumption providing protective effects against cognitive decline, including stroke and dementia.

Additional dark chocolate attributes include improving insulin sensitivity which can aid in improved blood sugar control and possibly delaying the onset of type 2 Diabetes. Dark chocolate and cocoa have demonstrated properties that improve satiety levels when eaten 20 minutes before a meal or as a treat after meals which could assist with weight loss/weight maintenance efforts. Dark chocolate is mineral rich packed with beneficial minerals such as potassium, zinc, selenium and iron.

When choosing your chocolate treat, go for as high a cocoa percent as your palate will allow for the highest flavonoid content and subsequent health benefits. Most studies on dark chocolate have used a 70% or higher cocoa content. Your chocolate treat ingredient list should also contain cocoa butter, some sugar and vanilla with not much else. Avoid dark chocolate which has other added fats such as coconut or palm oils.

Keep in mind that just one ounce of this heart friendly food (with 70-85% cacao content) has approximately 170 calories and 12 grams of fat. It is best to keep portion sizes small at approximately one ounce.

Saratoga County Public Health and the Office for the Aging Health Screening Schedule for *March 2016.*

Stonequist Apartments	10:00am to 11:00am	March 2, 2016
Moreau Community Center	10:00am to 11:45am	March 8, 2016
Saratoga Senior Center	10:00am to 12:00pm	March 14, 2016
Raymond Watkin Apartments	1:00pm to 3:00pm	March 17, 2016
Mechanicville Senior Center	10:00am to 12:00pm	March 23, 2016
Shenendehowa Community Center	1:30pm to 3:30pm	March 25, 2016

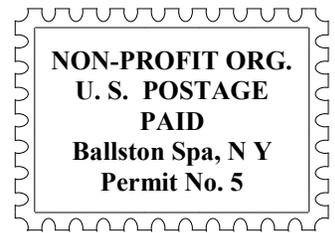
Need Help Paying for Medicare?

Medicare Savings Programs, also known as Medicare Buy-in programs, are programs that help pay your Medicare premiums and sometimes also coinsurance and deductibles.

Representatives from OFA will be available at the Health Screenings listed above to assist you or you may call 884-4100 to see if you qualify.

Saratoga County Office for the Aging
152 West High Street
Ballston Spa, N. Y. 12020

Return Service Requested



*Saratoga County Office for the Aging is funded by Title III of the Older Americans Act,
New York State Office for the Aging, the County of Saratoga and local Municipalities*

Does Medicare cover Flu shots?

Medicare does cover flu shots. Medicare Part B, the part of Medicare that covers most outpatient services, covers a flu shot once every flu season. The flu season typically runs from November until April. This means that Medicare may cover a flu shot twice in one calendar year. For example, if you get a shot in January 2016 for the 2015-2016 flu season, you could get another shot in November for the 2016-2017 flu season.

The flu shot is covered by Medicare Part B as a preventive service. This means that you will not have to meet your Part B deductible in order for Medicare to cover your flu shot. This is true whether you get your Medicare benefits through Original Medicare or a Medicare Advantage Plan.

If you have Original Medicare, you can get your flu shot from any health care provider, such as a doctor or pharmacy, as long as the provider accepts Medicare. You will pay nothing for a seasonal flu shot if you go to a provider that accepts Medicare and takes assignment. A provider that takes assignment accepts the Medicare-approved amount for health care services as full payment. If you see a provider who does not take assignment, you may have an out-of-pocket cost for your flu shot. You can call 1-800-MEDICARE or contact your health care provider to learn whether your health care provider accepts Medicare and takes assignment. The majority of providers throughout the United States take assignment.

If you have a Medicare Advantage Plan, your plan should pay for the entire cost of the flu shot as long as you follow the plan's rules. For example, a plan may agree to pay for the entire cost of your flu shot, as long as you receive it from doctors or pharmacies that are within the plan's network. Although a plan may impose some requirements, it cannot require you to get a referral before it will cover the cost of the flu shot.

Nutritional Program Weather Closing: If the home delivered meals are canceled due to the weather, the information will be listed on your local T.V. Stations. It will be listed under **Saratoga County Senior Meals.**