

Is Chocolate an Aphrodisiac?!

Alice Baland, Psychotherapist & Dietitian

That may depend on whether you want it to be or not! As a psychotherapist and dietitian, I know that the mind itself can make one believe that it is. Many people I know claim that chocolate is **“romance in the form of food.”**

It **is** true that the ancient Mayans considered chocolate the “food of the gods.” And quality chocolate certainly does taste that way to me! Of course, chocolate **tastes** sensuous and creamy the moment it touches the tongue, sending out immediate **pleasure** signals to the brain!

A lot of the positive effects have to do with **brain chemistry**. When we indulge in a **luscious** piece of chocolate, we release up to 300 **brain chemicals**, one of which is **serotonin**, which helps to **balance and calm** us.

Others are **endorphins**, which give us an **elevated mood**, almost a **natural high**. Another is **phenylethylamine**, or **PEA**. **PEA** is a natural substance that stimulates the same reaction in the body as the **feeling of falling in love**. But, it seems that the PEA in chocolate doesn't raise the body's supply enough to make a difference.

So from the psychological and biochemical arena, **chocolate can cause a rush of “feel good” neurotransmitters** into brain cells resulting in **optimal brain happiness!**

Is chocolate an aphrodisiac? More likely, indulging in the **ritual of chocolate** is **one** part of the equation of feeling romantic. Just **being with** someone you're attracted to is enough to get the PEA flowing! It also involves the heart-shaped red velvet boxes, the gold ribbons that encase the chocolate, the loving caresses, the smiles and flirtations, the thoughtfulness in presenting a gift from the heart.

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That may depend on whether you want it to be or not! As a psychotherapist and dietitian, I know that the mind itself can make one believe that it is. It **is** true that the ancient Mayans considered chocolate the “food of the gods.” And quality chocolate certainly does taste that way to me! Of course, chocolate **tastes** sensuous and creamy the moment it touches the tongue, sending out immediate **pleasure** signals to the brain!

A lot of the positive effects have to do with **brain chemistry**. When we indulge in a **luscious** piece of chocolate, we release a couple of **brain chemicals**, one of which is **serotonin**, which helps to **balance and calm**.

The other ones are **endorphins**, which give us an **elevated mood**, almost a **natural high**. So perhaps that could seem like an aphrodisiac.

From the psychological and biochemical arena, **chocolate can cause a rush of serotonin and endorphins - or “feel good” neurotransmitters - into brain cells resulting in optimal brain happiness!**

Plus, to the surprise of many, **chocolate contains very little caffeine**. It also contains fair amounts of **magnesium, copper, iron, and zinc**. There has been some great **research** showing that **chocolate** is high in **antioxidants**, which are natural disease fighting chemicals that are found in many fruits and vegetables. Some studies have shown that **chocolate** can actually **clean our arteries**.

But, of course, one with **romantic** inclinations or simply a **desire** for **chocolate** probably won't be much concerned with the nutritional content at the moment. We just know that it's a pleasure to give and enjoy the wonderful indulgence of **chocolate!**