

Chocolate good for arteries

THE PROVINCE . Monthly, August 30 2004 A15

MUNICH, Germany – Scientists have found that eating dark chocolate appears to improve the function of important cells lining the wall of blood vessels for at least three hours.

The study, involving 17 healthy young volunteers who agreed to eat a bar of dark chocolate and then get an ultrasound, found that eating dark chocolate seemed to make the blood vessels more flexible, which helps prevent the hardening of the arteries that leads to heart attacks.

But experts cautioned that the weight gain from eating a lot of chocolate probably would cancel out the apparent benefit.

Dark chocolate is rich in flavonoids, which act as natural antioxidants – chemicals that combat the damage oxygen does to the body.

However, that does not mean the chocolate binges will ward off a heart attack, experts warn.

The study was conducted by a cardiologist at Athens Medical School in Greece to test whether chocolate affected the functioning of the so-called endothelial cells in the walls of the blood vessels. Every second day the test subjects were given a placebo instead of chocolate.

“During the chocolate session, endothelial function was improved, whereas during the placebo day there were no such changes,” the study concluded. “The favourable effects of dark chocolate lasted for three hours at least.”

- **Association Press**