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Do you think chocolate, alcohol, and other so-called “vices” are bad for you? Think again—and learn why embracing what you love most when it comes to health can make you a happier person

▶ JACOB TEITELBAUM, MD

HEALTHY VICICES

Ever get the feeling that some conventional doctors and members of the media are trying to scare you to death ... about everything? You're not alone. I often tell doctors who I teach, “If people could live to be 120 years old by cutting out everything they enjoy, why bother?”

Unfortunately, too many people buy into the misconception that if something is enjoyable, it must be bad for you (and vice versa). But your body knows better than any physician what's good for you, and it tells you so by how you feel over time. The simple truth? Life is supposed to be fun. So if you feel great doing what you're doing, it's probably working. On the other hand, most things that really are bad for you will leave you feeling worse overall. Frankly, this is a message that I find far more reliable than what the media or medical establishment says.

Tuning In

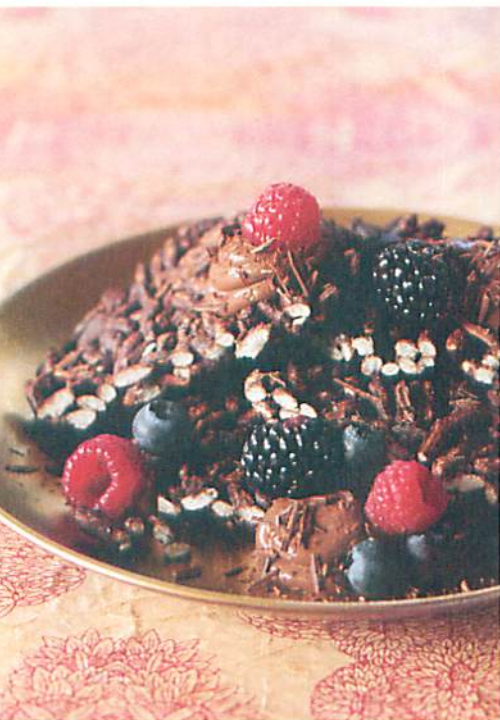
The goal, then, is to learn how to tune into and listen to your body, and to remember that it's not only okay to enjoy things, but it's actually a very good and healthy thing to do. Of course, there are some toxic substances that trigger pleasure centers in the brain (such as heroin and excess sugar), but these are the exceptions, not the rule. And though they do feel good in the short term, in the long run, they leave you feeling worse.

When trying to decide whether something is good for you, ask yourself two simple questions:

1. How does it feel?
2. How is it working out for me?

As an example, people who occasionally drink alcohol live longer than those who don't. But a heavy night of drinking may feel fun while you're doing it, but the hangover the next day tells you that it was a bad idea.

Here are six "vices" that actually can be good for you.



1. CHOCOLATE

In addition to being a natural antidepressant, dark chocolate is chock full of healthy antioxidants. Chocolate has been shown to help chronic fatigue syndrome, high blood pressure, cough, and a host of other problems. On the other hand it's high in calories and sugar. So go for quality instead of quantity. When I tell people to avoid sugar, I like to add the three magic words, "Except for Chocolate!" *Editors' note: For great sugar-free dark chocolate, try Lily's Sweets dark chocolate bars*

2. EGGS

Eggs are a wonderfully healthy food that have suffered from bad press—specifically the erroneous belief that eating cholesterol raises cholesterol levels and increases risk of heart disease. This is simply not the case. Your cholesterol levels are set more by dietary fats, weight, thyroid, and genetics. In fact, studies have shown that eating six eggs a day for six weeks has no effect on cholesterol, something first pointed out to me 30 years ago by the wonderful nutritionist Dana Laake (danalaake.com).

What's more, of all the foods we eat, the egg is one of the closest to being a "complete protein," meaning that the amounts of its component amino acids most closely mimic what humans are made of—and what we need in our diets.

3. ALCOHOL

Repeated research has shown that people who drink no alcohol do not live as long as people who have a few drinks a day. The problem is when the intake becomes excessive. When it goes over an average of 2–3 drinks a day, people who don't drink alcohol at all do better.



PUFFED RICE & CHOCOLATE WITH MOUSSE & FRESH BERRIES

Makes about 10 servings

Indulge your chocolate fix with this gluten-free treat, which is also perfect to serve at small get-togethers.

BARK

About 4 oz. dark chocolate
(65 percent)

1¾ oz puffed rice cereal

MOUSSE

4 oz dark chocolate
(65–70 percent)

3 large eggs, separated

GARNISH

9 oz berries such as raspberries, blackberries, and blueberries

Shaved dark chocolate

1. Chop chocolate for bark, and melt it in microwave or over a water bath.
2. Remove chocolate from heat, and fold in puffed rice. Spread mixture as thin as possible on a piece of parchment paper; let harden; and break into pieces.
3. Coarsely chop chocolate for mousse and melt on low power in microwave, stirring occasionally.
4. Lightly whisk egg yolks. In another bowl, whisk egg whites until soft peaks form.
5. Stir egg yolks into chocolate and then quickly fold into egg whites.
6. Fill disposable piping bag with mousse and pipe dollops on chocolate bark pieces. Garnish with berries and shaved chocolate.

Recipe excerpted from Chocolate: 90 Sinful and Sumptuous Indulgences by Elisabeth Johansson

Per serving: 190 cal; 4g pro; 10g total fat (5g sat fat); 20g carb; 55mg chol; 25mg sod; 2g fiber; 11g sugars

4. SUNSHINE

Sunshine is critical for production of vitamin D. Numerous studies have shown that vitamin D deficiency is associated with a marked increase in diabetes, cancer, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, falling, immune diseases, and other health problems. And vitamin D deficiency is becoming epidemic because of the misguided advice to avoid sunshine. The proper advice? Avoid sunburn!

5. SEX

For those who would argue against this "vice," I would make the simple argument that without it, humans would cease to exist. Sex with someone you love, in a committed relationship, can be wonderfully healthy. One study suggested that it leaves people looking younger (likely because

sex causes release of growth hormone, often called the "fountain of youth hormone"). Other research has shown that people with heart disease are no more likely to have a heart attack during sex. The exception? When they were having sex while cheating on their spouses!

6. SALT

As we've noted for many years, the current fad of salt restriction is ill-advised. And recent studies are bearing this out. In one, people who restricted their salt intake to the American Heart Association's recommended guidelines (1.5 grams of sodium per day) were twice as likely to die during the study period as those who didn't.

Beyond that, unless you have good reason to do so, salt restriction is a bad

idea. This is especially true for people with fibromyalgia, adrenal fatigue, and/or autonomic dysfunction, where salt restriction will cause you to crash and burn. So my recommendation? Get a good quality sea salt, such as Celtic sea salt, and let your taste buds be your guide.

The Bottom Line

Hopefully, in time, we will get past the medical misconception that "if it feels good, it's bad for you." In the meanwhile, learn to check in with your body, and your feelings, to see what they're telling you. And enjoy good things that feel good. That way, if you do live to be 120 years old, you will actually be glad that you did!

As Mark Twain famously said, "moderation in all things—including moderation." So I think I'll go have a Margarita right now.

Jacob Teitelbaum, MD, is Director of the Practitioners Alliance Network (PAN) and author of the free iPhone app Cures A-Z. He is also the author of the bestselling books *From Fatigued to Fantastic!*, *Pain Free 1-2-3—A Proven Program for Eliminating Chronic Pain Now*, *Beat Sugar Addiction NOW!*, and *Real Cause, Real Cure*. Visit him online at EndFatigue.com.

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The advertisement features a background image of a sunset over a beach. In the foreground, the silhouettes of a man, a woman, and a child are shown. The man is riding a bicycle, the woman is walking, and the child is also walking. In the center, four bottles of Chia Omega supplements are displayed. From left to right, they are: 1. Chia Omega D3, 2. Chia Omega + Enzymes, 3. Chia Omega + CoQ10, and 4. Chia Omega + EPA & DHA. Each bottle has a label with the product name and 'ESSENTIAL FORMULAS' at the top. There are two award logos: a blue circular one for '2014 BEST OF SUPPLEMENTS AWARDS WINNER' and a white rectangular one for 'Best NEW Supplement Winner'. A blue circular NSF logo is also present, with the text 'Certified for Sport™ www.nsf.org' below it. At the bottom, there is a call to action: 'Learn More: Visit www.ChiaOmega.com or call (800) 450-5180' followed by Facebook and Twitter icons. A disclaimer at the bottom reads: '* These statements have not been evaluated by the FDA. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease.' Below that is a small URL: '† According to internal industry analyses of product composition and <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3518271/#B7>