Mmm… CHOCOLATE

Chocolate is the only ingredient that should be in its very own food group. Well, not really, but it seems as if it should be. Powerfully comforting, creamy, and delicious, many of us crave chocolate at least several times a week. In fact, most of my clients ask me whether a Smart Life can include chocolate, which begs the question…

Is Chocolate Good for You?

The answer is both yes and no.

Chocolate has been used for centuries to treat bronchitis, sexual malaise, fatigue, hangovers, anemia, depression, memory loss, high blood pressure, poor eyesight and more. It also helps release that feel-good neurotransmitter, serotonin, in the brain. The key is eating the right kind, otherwise you're simply loading up on sugar, calories and junky ingredients.

Have Your Chocolate and Eat It, Too

Chocolate begins life as raw cacao (pronounced, kah-kow) beans. Loaded with antioxidants, minerals, vitamins and plant phenols, cacao is a powerful superfood.

However, the more processed cacao becomes — think commercially produced candy bars — the fewer healthy components remain. So how do you get the most out of your chocolate fix?

- **Don't be afraid of the dark.** The darker the chocolate, the more beneficial cacao it contains.
- **Know your percentages**. The number on dark chocolate packaging refers to the percentage of cacao bean in chocolate. To boost your health and satisfy your sweet tooth, look for dark chocolate that has 75% to 85% cacao.
- **Go raw**. The more unprocessed your chocolate, the more

nutrients it contains, and the least amounts of additives like sugar, milk and preservatives.