

## **Chocolate and Ebola: What was the Deal?**

We're not sure if you had noticed, but chocolate prices had a surge in recent years. Why? A connection with the recent Ebola outbreak. It's a bigger connection than you may think, and here is what to know about this odd couple:

### **Where do most of the world's cocoa beans come from?**

West Africa (specifically Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria, and Cameroon) produces about 70 percent of the world's cocoa supply. Countries like Cote d'Ivoire (ever heard of it?) and Ghana produce about 55 percent of all the cocoa in the world.

A few years back, cocoa prices had a surge, which was a result of the Ebola outbreak. Where did this alarming virus spread? You guessed it, in West Africa, where most of the cocoa beans are imported from.

### **What's the connection?**

On October 31, 2014, a Twitter account sent a tweet that has an attached image that says health officials in Africa had confirmed that a chocolate factory worker infected with Ebola had "bled" into a batch of chocolate. What's caused fear was that the Ebola-infected chocolate was packed and shipped abroad just in time for Halloween. That must have caused an alarm for trick or treat activities.

### **Why was it so disturbing?**

Besides the fact that people feared to consume chocolate for a certain period of time — it was really a bad news for chocolate lovers like us, the 2014 Ebola outbreak had numbers that shocked not only the chocolate industry, but the whole world in general. That year alone, there were 7,470 total cases and out of those patients, 3,431 died. What made it even more horrible is that the main affected countries were some of the world's biggest exporters of cocoa beans. That outbreak was the worst since the Ebola virus was first identified in 1976, with more than 6,000 reported cases, and about half of them actually died.

### **The Effects of Ebola on Chocolate Prices**

The rise of cocoa prices during that time was closely related to the spread of the Ebola virus in cocoa-exporting countries. About that time, the daily price of cocoa was at over \$3,200 per metric ton, which was way higher than a year ago. For ordinary chocolate consumers like us, that means a Hershey's milk chocolate bar was sold at least 5 to 10 cents higher than usual. That's huge, especially for kids. And teens. Most of us, really!

## **The Good News**

Besides the fact that this report shocked the chocolate world about four years ago, it was revealed that you cannot get Ebola from chocolate (Phew...). The virus is not spread through the air, water, or by food. (What a relief!)

So, you can now go ahead and grab your beloved chocolate bar and indulge — because you know that your favorite sweet won't cause you to catch a fever, have body ache, or worse! Instead, more flavonoids and more treats!.