

Chocolate, a cough remedy not to be sneezed at

By Stephen Adams
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IT is a remedy surely worth trying whether it works or not. Chocolate may cure a persistent cough, according to scientists.

They have isolated a naturally-occurring substance in cocoa that attacks the “root cause” of the condition that afflicts 7.5 million Britons each year.

At present, most cough syrups contain codeine, an opiate that has more drawbacks than benefits for those under-18, according to official guidance.

Now a British-based drugs company called SEEK is helping to develop a medication based on theobromine, which it says has been shown to inhibit the inappropriate firing of the vagus nerve, a key feature of a persistent cough.

The drug is found in significant quantities in cocoa-based products, said the firm. It is already sold in South Korea and SEEK hopes it will be available in British pharmacies within two years.

Prof Alyn Morice, from the Hull Cough Clinic, said that while it was “theoretically possible” to get enough theobromine from a bar of dark chocolate to alleviate a cough, studies were required to identify the exact amount needed.