Fight cataracts with veggies and grains

Cataracts lead to blurred and reduced vision due to a cloudiness occurring in the lens of the eye. Common in the elderly and a leading factor in visual disability in North America, cataracts may be less common among those who eat higher than average quantities of fruits, veggies, and whole grains. A 10-year study featured in the *Journal of Nutrition* in 2004 highlights that women who consumed six to 11 servings of whole grains, two to four servings of fruit, and three to five servings of vegetables each day were less likely to have cataracts than those women consuming lesser quantities of these foods. A plate of pasta is equivalent to three to four servings of whole grains; an apple counts as two servings of fruit.

The design of the study indicated that multiple aspects of an overall healthy eating pattern, rather than a specific food group, seemed to have the most protective effect. Women with higher intakes showed a modest 10 to 15 percent reduced risk of cataracts. Nutrients that have been shown to diminish the potential for cataract development include beta carotene, bilberry, lutein, and vitamin C from both food and supplements. For better vision, choose green leafy vegetables, richly coloured fruits and vegetables, and whole grain breads and cereals (such as oatmeal) as regular components of your diet.

—Sally Errey

Pomegranate protects prostate

Studies in the past year from the US are showing compelling evidence that consumption of pomegranate may be able to fend off prostate cancer. In 2005, researchers at the University of Wisconsin discovered that when human prostate cancer cells were exposed to pomegranate juice, they died.

This study was confirmed in humans in *Clinical Cancer Research* in 2006 by researchers at the University of California. Fifty men, who had undergone surgery or radiation therapy for prostate cancer, but who had been identified at risk for further recurrence, were selected for the trial. Researchers measured the rate of time it took for the prostate specific antigen (PSA) levels to double. An increased PSA indicates the potential for advancement of the condition; shorter doubling times indicate that the cancer is advancing quickly. Although a standard doubling time is 15 months, men consuming just 8 ounces (250 mL) of pomegranate juice daily increased their average doubling time to 54 months. Some men in the study had suppressed PSA levels after three years, despite having received no other treatment beyond the daily pomegranate juice. —SE

More nutrition information on page 98