You Truly Are What You Eat:
The Nutritional Component of Anti-Aging

Diet and nutrition play a profound role in longevity. The everyday food choices you make have lifelong implications. For example, dietary factors account for about 30% of all cancers in Western countries. In this article, we survey the latest clinical studies demonstrating the health benefits of anti-aging foods.

**Mediterranean Diet May Benefit Brain As Well As Heart**

The Mediterranean diet is characterized by high daily intakes of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains; a restricted consumption of red meat; low to moderate intakes of dairy products, fish, and poultry; and liberal use of use of olive oil. Nikolaos Scarmeas and colleagues from Columbia University Medical Center (New York, USA) studied a multiethnic group of 1875 men and women residing in metropolitan New York City. The team determined that those study subjects who adhered closely to a Mediterranean diet reduced the risk of developing mild cognitive impairment (MCI) by 28% (compared with those who did not follow such a diet). Additionally, those with MCI at the start of the study were at 48% less risk of being diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease (AD) over the study’s 4.5-year period if they adhered to the Mediterranean diet. The researchers observe: “Higher adherence to the [Mediterranean diet] is associated with a trend for reduced risk of developing MCI and with reduced risk of MCI conversion to AD.”


**Carotenes Correspond to Lower Cardiovascular Disease Deaths**

In a study involving 559 men followed for 15 years, Brian Buijsse and colleagues from Wageningen University (The Netherlands) found that an increased consumption of alpha- and beta-carotene in the diet significantly reduced the risks of heart disease deaths. Specifically, the team found that the increased intake of carrots, rich in alpha- and beta-carotene, corresponded to a 17% reduction in the risk of cardiovascular-related death. Interestingly, the researchers also found that increased intakes of other carotenoids, vitamin C and alpha- or gamma-tocopherol (the two most common types of vitamin E in the diet), had no influence on the risk of cardiovascular-related death.


**Fish Rich in Omega-3s Lower Heart Disease Risk**

Omega-3 fatty acids, found prominently in certain types of fish, are cardioprotective through their antiarrhythmic effect. Akira Sekikawa and colleagues from the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health (USA) studied the differences in blood levels of omega-3s in populations of Americans, Japanese-Americans, and Japanese. The researchers found that Japanese men had the lowest atherosclerosis level, while double the levels of omega-3s in the blood, as compared with American and Japanese-American counterparts. The team writes: “Very high levels of omega-3s have strong properties that may help prevent the buildup of cholesterol in the arteries.”


**Low-Fat Dairy Foods Beneficial for Blood Pressure**

High blood pressure is a leading and often preventable risk factor worldwide. Estefania Toledo and colleagues from the University of Navarra (Spain) studied a group of 2290 elderly men and women at high cardiovascular risk, assessing dietary intakes and measuring blood pressure for a 12-month period. The team found that systolic and diastolic blood pressures of those with the highest average level of low-fat dairy intake (631 grams per day) were 4.2 and 1.8 mm Hg lower than that of study subjects with the lowest average intakes (3.1 grams per day). The researchers posit that calcium, found in significant levels in low-fat dairy foods, may inhibit the constriction of vascular smooth
muscle cell, while also improving the sodium-potassium balance. Conclude the researchers: "Intake of low-fat dairy products was inversely associated with blood pressure in an older population at high cardiovascular risk, suggesting a possible protective effect against hypertension."


**Green Leafy Vegetables Lower Lung Cancer Risk**

Olga Dosil-Diaz and colleagues from the Galician Public Foundation for Health Emergencies (Spain) studied the dietary intakes of 295 Spanish residents with lung cancer and 322 healthy counterparts. The researchers found that consumption of at least one portion daily of green leafy vegetables (such as cabbage, lettuce, turnip tops) correlated to a 50% reduction in the risk of lung cancer. Consumption of other vegetables, such as tomatoes and green beans, showed a protective but nonsignificant effect. The team also found that fruit was only nominally protective. They cite that green leafy vegetables contain 10 to 100 times the level of vitamin A than other vegetables and fruits, and thus conclude that: "Vitamin A possesses the greatest protective effect against lung cancer by reducing the risk posed by different mechanisms, particularly with regard to its antioxidant potential."


**Apples Ward Off Colon Cancer**

Dieter Schrenk and colleagues from the University of Kaiserslautern (Germany), have found that apple pectin and apple juice are high in a compound known as butyrate, a short-chain fatty acid. Butyrate not only contributes to the maintenance of healthy colon tissue, but the team found that the compound exerts an anticancer effect on the colon by inhibiting the enzymes necessary for tumors to develop. Schrenk D, Waldecker M, Kautenburger I, et al. Histone-deacetylase inhibition and butyrate formation: Fecal slurry incubations with apple pectin and apple juice extracts. Nutrition. 2008 Apr;24(4):366-74. Epub 2008 Feb 11.

**Diet May Reduce Risk of Prostate Cancer**

Previous studies have linked prostate cancer risk to the dietary habits of the Western lifestyle. Robert W.-L. Ma and colleagues from the University of New South Wales (Australia) conducted an evidence-based review of dietary recommendations in the prevention of prostate cancer as well as in the management of patients with prostate cancer. The researchers found that a diet low in fat, high in vegetables and fruit, and avoiding high energy intake, excessive meat, and excessive dairy products and calcium intake may be helpful in preventing prostate cancer, and for patients diagnosed with prostate cancer. Specifically, consumption of tomatoes, cauliflower, broccoli, green tea, and vitamins including vitamin E and selenium seemed to propose a decreased risk of prostate cancer. Consumption of highly processed or charcoaled meats, dairy products, and fats seemed to be correlated with prostate cancer. State the researchers: "Although not conclusive, results suggest that general dietary modification has a beneficial effect on the prevention of prostate cancer. In patients with prostate cancer, dietary therapy allows patients to be an active participant in their treatment."


**Chocolate Boosts Blood Flow in Brain**

Chocolate is high in flavanols, a type of antioxidants, and has in previous studies been shown to benefit cardiovascular health in that cocoa flavanols improve blood flow to the heart muscle. Farzaneh Sorond and colleagues from the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (Boston, Massachusetts, USA), have directly linked cocoa flavanols with improved cerebral blood flow. Thirteen men and women (average age 72) consumed flavanol-rich cocoa, and a counterpart group of 21 study subjects consumed the same quantity of a flavonoid-poor cocoa product. For both groups, brain scans and ultrasound were conducted to analyze the blood flow in the brain. The 13 participants who consumed flavanol-rich cocoa (900 mg per day) for two weeks achieved a 10% increase in cerebral blood flow.


**Omega-3-Rich Fish Helps Ward Off Alzheimer’s Disease**

Many studies of omega-3 fatty acids, found in high concentrations in oily fish such as salmon, have focused on identifying a potential therapeutic role in maintaining cardiovascular health, with a few small-scale studies suggesting the benefits of omega-3s to prevent age-related cognitive decline. Emiliano Albanese and colleagues...
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from King's College London (United Kingdom) completed a large-scale survey of 14,960 men and women, ages 65 and over, living in China, India, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Mexico, and Peru. After adjusting for confounding factors and pooling the data from all seven countries, the researchers observed a dose-dependent inverse association between dementia and fish consumption. Specifically, the team found that increased intake of oily fish reduced the risk of dementia by 20%. Meat consumption, however, was found to increase dementia risk. The team observes that their research confirms the "neuroprotective actions of omega-3 long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids commonly found in fish."

According to the World Health Organization, globally, there are more than 1 billion overweight adults, at least 300 million of them obese. People are becoming obese due to the availability of food, changes in the kind of food eaten, and decreased exercise. Industrialization, urbanization, and mechanized transport have reduced physical activity; thus more than 60% of the global population is not sufficiently active. By failing to make smart dietary choices — the first step towards maintaining a healthy weight — you become vulnerable to a variety of diseases (such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and cancers) that ultimately may compromise how long and how well you live.

Find out how you can uncover the secrets of a healthy, vital, productive lifespan by using the physician directory online at Worldhealth.net, the official educational website of the American Academy of Anti-Aging Medicine (A4M). Log on today to www.worldhealth.net, the leading Internet portal sharing the very latest knowledge in aging intervention as embraced by the A4M's 22,000-plus physician, scientist, and health practitioner members from 105 nations worldwide. While at Worldhealth.net, be sure to sign up for the free Anti-Aging News Journal, delivered weekly to your computer desktop.