



Go Red with Tomato Products to Fight Inflammation and Disease

Did you know that tomato products, the humble staple food relied upon by cultures across the world, provide unique health benefits? Today, researchers are becoming more interested in how tomato products tamp down inflammation. A growing body of evidence reveals that inflammation may be a crucial factor in the development of several diseases, including cancer, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome, osteoporosis, and neurological degenerative disorders. This may partially explain why tomato products are linked with a lower risk of many diseases such as heart disease and certain types of cancer.

Tomato products are also affordable, easy to use, and delicious—making it even easier to add colorful, health-protective fruit and vegetable servings to the diet. It's no wonder that tomato products are among the most popular vegetables in the country, second only to potatoes. After all, what would some of American's favorite dishes—from pizza to tacos—be without tomato products?

Top Ten Reasons to Go Red! Don't underestimate the power of tomato products for health promotion. Scientific knowledge on tomato products' benefits is growing to include many health benefits.

- 1. Discover a Nutritional Powerhouse.** Tomato products are loaded with essential vitamins, minerals, and fiber—all in a neat low-fat, low-calorie package. One cup of canned tomatoes contains 41 calories, 0 grams fat, 2.4 grams fiber, 2 grams protein, 37% Daily Value (DV) vitamin C, 8% DV vitamin A, 9% DV vitamin K, 13% DV vitamin B6, 13% DV iron, 13% DV potassium, and 9% DV manganese.
- 2. Dig Into a Lycopene Mother Lode.** Tomato products are rich in carotenoids, the powerful antioxidant group, that inactivate free radicals, protect against cancer, and slow development of atherosclerosis. The most plentiful carotenoid is lycopene, and tomato products are responsible for more than 80% of the lycopene in the U.S. diet. Research suggests that lycopene may be a big factor behind the health-protective effects of tomato products. Lycopene in processed tomatoes is much better absorbed than that of fresh tomatoes. In addition, the lycopene in tomatoes appears to have synergistic effects with other nutrients in foods.
- 3. Fight Inflammation.** Tomato products may help cool down inflammation, widely understood as a root in many chronic diseases. Scientists recently discovered that in a group of 56 overweight/obese adults, those who ate a high-tomato diet for six weeks had lower levels of inflammatory markers and increased mean vessel diameter (*FASEB J*, 2009).
- 4. Protect Against Oxidative Stress.** Eating foods rich in antioxidant vitamins and carotenoids, such as tomato products, reduces oxidative stress markers and the LDL-oxidation process—key in the development of cardiovascular disease. Dietary intake of more than 40 mg/day of lycopene reduced susceptibility of LDL to oxidation in a group of nonsmoking subjects in one study (*Clin Chem*, 2000).

- 5. Score Powerful Heart-Health Benefits.** Regular intake of tomato products has been consistently associated with lower rates of cardiovascular disease. In a study of nearly 40,000 middle-aged and older women, scientists discovered that higher levels of tomato-based products in the diet were linked with lower rates of cardiovascular disease (*J Nutr*, 2003).
- 6. Improve Cholesterol Levels.** One of tomato products' heart health benefits is improved lipid profiles, according to some studies. In a study including 21 healthy participants, those who consumed a three-week high-tomato diet experienced a significant decrease in LDL cholesterol levels (*Br J Nutr*, 2007).
- 7. Control Blood Pressure.** Low-sodium tomato products, increasingly available in supermarkets, have the perfect nutritional profile to fit into the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) Diet. Research is confirming that tomato products may aid in treating hypertension. In a single-blind, placebo-controlled study that included 31 participants, a short-term treatment with tomato extract reduced blood pressure in people with grade-1 hypertension untreated with drugs (*Am Heart J*, 2006).
- 8. Take On Prostate Cancer.** Research supports that eating lycopene-rich food sources like tomato products may help reduce the risk of some forms of cancer, such as digestive tract and pancreatic cancers, but the bulk of the cancer-protective evidence is linked with prostate cancer. According to the *Second Expert Report—Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity, and the Prevention of Cancer: A Global Perspective*, a scientific analysis of cancer prevention that called upon more than 4,000 studies and reports, substantial evidence indicates eating tomato products and foods containing lycopene probably does protect against cancer, potentially decreasing risk of prostate cancer by 11%.
- 9. Defend Against Sun Damage.** Tomato products may offer natural protection from the sun's damaging UV rays. The effects of tomato-based products on UV-light induced erythema were investigated by German researchers. After 12 weeks of consumption, it was discovered that prevention of erythema formation was observed in all groups, with a more pronounced protective effect in the tomato extract and tomato extract drink groups (*Int J Vitam Nutr Res*, 2005).
- 10. Maximize Bone Health.** Laboratory research has hinted that carotenoid intake may protect bone health. And a new study analyzing data from the Framingham Osteoporosis Study found that people with the highest total carotenoid intake in their diets had the lowest risk of hip fractures (*J Bone Miner Res*, 2009).

There are more reasons than ever to enjoy the health rewards of tomato products in your diet. Paint your plate with tomato products every day—include them in soups, stews, casseroles, pastas, sandwiches, stir-fries, curries, tacos, wraps, and side dishes. Go red today!

For more information on tomato products, visit the Tomato Products Wellness Council at www.tomatowellness.com.