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New Research Supports Eating Tomato Products For Heart Health

APTOS, Calif. (November 16, 2010) – New research findings support the heart health benefits of tomato products. The findings, presented at three sessions during the American Dietetic Association’s Food & Nutrition Conference & Expo held in Boston last week, introduced new data that continues to support a body of evidence linking tomato products such as canned tomatoes, tomato paste, salsa, juice and sauce with heart health.

Lycopene and other antioxidants found in food sources of tomato products appear to be behind the reduction in oxidative stress and inflammation associated with consuming tomato products according to Julie Talbot, MS, RD, Illinois Institute of Technology. Talbot reported that “In a randomized, placebo-controlled trial, tomato products significantly attenuated oxidative stress and associated inflammatory response, with potential benefits on endothelial function.” These benefits are linked with reduced risk of heart disease. A high-fat meal can raise levels of inflammation within hours of consumption. This and other studies suggest that if tomato products are consumed with the meal, the inflammatory effect may be blunted.

According to co-author Britt Burton-Freeman, PhD, Director of Nutrition and Health Promoting Foods, National Center for Food Safety and Technology, Illinois Institute of Technology, a speaker on dietary influences on inflammation and chronic disease at a FNCE session, “Our research supports that eating a diet rich in particular plant foods that are high in antioxidant compounds like tomato products may reduce inflammation and oxidative stress, and thus, help reduce the risk of heart disease.”

More evidence that tomato products may protect against inflammation, the root of heart disease, was presented by Tissa Kappagoda, PhD of the University of California-Davis, and Penny Kris-Etherton, PhD of Penn State University, who reported findings from the multi-center, randomized, controlled trial that they co-authored. The study, which is awaiting publication, found that consuming a diet high in tomato products, blunted LDL oxidation and reduced levels of the inflammation. The study also found a positive effect on blood pressure.

“Eating more tomato products is a simple, delicious way to help reduce your risk of heart disease, because these foods are popular, economical and easy to include in your favorite dishes,” says Sharon Palmer, RD, a Los Angeles-based dietitian.

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