

Choose Tomato Products this Summer to Provide Added Protection from the Sun's Harmful Rays

Powerful Antioxidants in Tomato Products Can Help Protect Against UV Radiation

Sacramento, CA (July 1, 2009) – The arrival of the warm summer sun means more and more Americans will be spending plenty of time outside pursuing their favorite seasonal activities – all the while exposed to the sun and its harmful rays. In fact, each year more than one million cases of skin cancer are diagnosed. According to the Center for Disease Control, one in five Americans will be diagnosed with skin cancer in their lifetime.

Though most preventative tips are well known (seek shade, wear a hat, use sunscreen), growing evidence is mounting from scientific research linking some natural compounds found in plants to protecting people against damage caused by ultra-violet (UV) radiation through the consumption of foods rich in carotenoids and flavonoids. Scientists believe that these plant compounds may provide humans with sun protection.

In nature, carotenoids and flavonoids protect plants against excess light. Based on the scientific research completed to date, it appears that this protection may be conferred to people when they eat foods rich in carotenoids and flavonoids.

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“When consumed, these compounds are distributed into tissues of the body that are exposed to the light such as our skin and our eyes,” said Sharon Palmer, RD, a registered dietitian. She added, “In particular, carotenoids, lycopene and beta-carotene, which are powerful antioxidants found abundantly in tomato paste and tomato products, caught the researchers attention.”

A number of different research projects over the past few years have continued to link some natural compounds found in plants to protecting humans against damage caused by UV radiation. Researchers from Germany’s Heinrich-Heine University have been publishing a number of articles on the effects of plant compounds on UV radiation protection. In 2001, the *Journal of Nutrition* published a discovery by German scientists that dietary tomato paste protects against UV-light induced erythema, or sunburn, in humans. In another study, published in 2005 in the *International Journal for Vitamin and Nutrition Research*, researchers investigated the effects of supplementation with tomato-based products on the protection against UV-light induced erythema and found a more pronounced protective effect in the tomato extract and tomato extract/drink groups. And, in 2007, *Molecular Biotechnology*, reported on research findings that dietary micronutrients such as processed tomato products may contribute to life-long protection against harmful UV radiation because of the presence of powerful anti-oxidants like beta-carotene and lycopene which are capable of

scavenging singlet molecular oxygen and peroxy radicals caused by photo-oxidation.

Research continues to point out that perhaps an effective way to fight UV damage to your body may be from the inside out – and by the amount of tomato products you consume.

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“No matter how advanced our world becomes, it is always surprising that some of the best health tips remain the sage advice that has been passed down from generation to generation. Growing up in a family of farmers, my grandmother always told us to eat our vegetables and her table always featured dishes with tomato sauce, paste or juice,” said tomato farmer, Aaron Barcellos. The Los Banos, California tomato farmer and chairman of the Tomato Products Wellness Council added, “She always felt it was important to eat well because food gave you strength. In looking at the new research, grandma may have been way ahead of her time!”

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The Tomato Products Wellness Council was created in September 2006 to fund scientific research investigating the benefits of consuming a diet rich in tomato products. The Council, made up of growers, processors and brand representatives, was formed to build demand for and increase consumption of affordable and nutritious tomato products.

