

[IMAGE]

You Are What You Eat

The Nutritional Component of Anti-Aging

By Dr. Ronald Klatz and Dr. Robert Goldman

As we age, we want to maintain the same quality of life we enjoyed in our younger years. The everyday food choices we make can have lifelong implications. For example, dietary factors account for about 30 percent of all cancers in Western countries. As research continues to show, a nutritional anti-aging regimen can help keep you active and healthy for life.

Let's look at the latest clinical studies demonstrating the main components of an ideal anti-aging diet.

Go Fish

image - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark Certain types of fish are high in essential fatty acids, which helps to lower cholesterol and prevent the aggregation of blood platelets on artery walls. These omega-3 fats also have been shown to elevate a blue mood. Mackerel and salmon (wild, not farm-raised) are good fish choices. A study by University of Agder (Norway) researchers suggests a diet featuring fish can "promote population health, as well as help preserve cultural diversity in eating habits and contribute to more environmentally friendly eating."

Note: Some fish should be avoided due to high levels of the potential cancer-causing agent methylmercury. Salmon is especially low in methylmercury, as are flounder, cod and haddock, which also are great sources of low-fat protein and high in B vitamins. Trout, tuna and halibut are rich in omega-3s, iron and magnesium, but fairly high in methylmercury, so limit your consumption of these fish. It's best to totally avoid swordfish and shark, which are extremely high in methylmercury.

Antioxidants: Your Best Weapon Against Cancer

image - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark Residents of the Okinawan prefecture in Japan have an average life expectancy of 82 years, among the longest in the world. The area's residents also commonly suffer little or no age-related disability. Noting that Okinawa is a distinct area characterized by unique

traditional food habits, Kyoto University (Japan) researchers have found that food items typical in the Okinawan diet possess higher cancer-preventive potential than those common in Japan (and the rest of the world). Specifically, locally grown sugar cane and curcumin (tumeric) were identified to contain high antioxidant activity.

Fruits and Vegetables Promote Weight Loss

image - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark Researchers from the University of Sao Paulo (Brazil) found increased fruit and vegetable intake promotes weight loss in overweight adults. According to the study, each 100-gram increase in fruit consumption resulted in a reduction of 300 grams of body weight after a six-month period. Similarly, a 100-gram increase in vegetable intake associated with a 500-gram reduction in body weight after six months. Further, each 1-gram increase in fiber intake from fruit and vegetable sources resulted in a 115-gram and 180-gram loss, respectively, of body weight in the six-month period.

Indulge Your Sweet Tooth?

image - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark It's true: Chocolate really can be good for your health. Cocoa, the primary compound in chocolate, is high in polyphenols (natural antioxidants), and research suggests cocoa contains five times the polyphenols of an apple. Choose dark chocolate for its numerous health benefits. Researchers from the University Hospital of Cologne (Germany) found that a daily serving of dark chocolate reduced both systolic and diastolic blood pressure by 2.9 mm Hg and 1.9 mm Hg, respectively, without affecting body weight, blood lipid levels, or blood sugar (glucose) levels. Additionally, Harvard Medical School researchers have found flavanol-rich chocolate boosts blood flow in the brain, thereby potentially reducing the risk of cognitive loss and dementia.

What You Eat Affects How You Look

image - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark In one of the first studies to look at how nutrients affect the skin, researchers in the United Kingdom have identified foods that reduce the appearance of skin aging. Higher intakes of vitamin C and linoleic acid lead to fewer wrinkles, less dryness and stronger skin. In contrast, consuming excess fats and carbohydrates gives skin a more aged look. Choose citrus fruits and colorful vegetables for vitamin C. Oils (such as safflower, sunflower, olive, peanut and sesame) and eggs are good sources of linoleic acid.

Visit the Mediterranean - Without Leaving Home

image - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark The Mediterranean diet emphasizes high consumption of grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes and nuts; good fats (olive oil and omega-3 fatty acids); and a sparingly low intake of red meat. University of Athens (Greece) researchers conducted a multicenter study involving 74,607 European men and women (ages 60 years or older at the start of the study); the Mediterranean diet was found to reduce the risk of death by 14 percent.

Recently, University of Cambridge (United Kingdom) researchers applied the Mediterranean diet to a group of 214,284 men and 166,012 women living in the United States. Across all ages and both sexes, the Mediterranean diet reduced deaths from cardiovascular disease, cancers and all causes.

Choose Color

image - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark Fruits and vegetables with deep, dark hues pack the most ORAC (oxygen radical absorbance capacity). That's important because ORAC-rich fruits and vegetables are reported to have more nutrients and greater antioxidant power to scavenge free radicals. The vibrant coloration of red grapes, berries (blueberries, cranberries, bilberries and lingonberries), cocoa, tumeric (curcuminoids), rhubarb and apples is attributed to their high concentrations of polyphenols, a compound found only in plants and shown to have therapeutic potential for reducing the risks of cardiovascular disease (including heart disease and elevated cholesterol), various cancers, diabetes and stroke. For example, Tufts University researchers discovered that the consumption of cranberries reduced the risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD) by increasing the resistance of LDL to oxidation, inhibiting platelet aggregation and reducing blood pressure, and also acted on other anti-clotting, anti-inflammatory mechanisms.

image - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark According to the World Health Organization, there are more than 1 billion overweight adults globally, at least 300 million of whom are 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 percent of the global population is not sufficiently active. By failing to make smart dietary choices, which is the first step toward 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.

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