

[IMAGE]

Drink Your Greens

By Dr. Donald L. Hayes

As if it weren't hard enough squeezing in "five-a-day" of fruits and vegetables, the U.S. government now recommends up to 13 servings each day! If you don't want to graze on lettuce and broccoli all day, green food drinks could be the answer you've been looking for.

Most of us have heard that diets high in fruits and vegetables can help us lose weight and reduce our risk of heart disease, cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure, cataracts, macular degeneration, osteoporosis, arthritis and even wrinkles. As a matter of fact, according to the National Cancer Institute, eight to 10 servings a day can cut our risk of some cancers in half!

However, with the U.S. government releasing its new dietary recommendations urging us to eat up to 13 servings of fruits and vegetables each and every day, it's certain many of us are falling short of that goal. Fortunately, health care providers today can offer the power of "superfood" drink mixes with the antioxidant protection of 10-15 servings of fruits and vegetables to help fill this nutritional gap.

Why Green Foods?

A glass of blended green vegetables. - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark Food science has only recently come to realize there is much more to nutrition than just vitamins and minerals. Indeed, there may be well more than 1,000 different plant chemicals, known as phytochemicals, available in fruits and vegetables that may have a positive metabolic effect. Further study has shown that the fruits and vegetables that come in rich, vibrant colors like tomatoes, carrots, spinach, broccoli, blueberries and raspberries are much more potent and beneficial than pastel-colored produce like iceberg lettuce, bananas, celery, corn and potatoes. Furthermore, certain foods may contain greater quantities of antioxidants, fibers, probiotics and even specific medicinal substances (especially in the case of many edible herbs and spices).

As we have become more aware of the amazing and broad spectrum of health-promoting, anti-aging and disease-preventing benefits of fruits and vegetables especially high in this "new" array of such micronutrients, a new name for them has emerged: "superfoods." While you probably have heard of these foods before, the superfoods concept now has been expanded to include functional foods known as

green-food drink mixes. Green-food drinks offer many health benefits when compared to other types of food. Green-food drinks typically are a superlative health food because they usually contain a wide variety of phytonutrients including vitamins, minerals, proteins, essential fatty acids, flavonoids, carotenoids and other substances that together exhibit antioxidant, detoxifying, anti-inflammatory and anti-microbial benefits.

Green-food mixes are different from mainstream vitamin and mineral supplements because they are not synthetic nor are they isolated compounds; they are whole-food sources of nutrition. They are the base of the food chain and, therefore, the source of optimal nutrition. They are nature's multivitamin/mineral supplement, providing these essential nutrients in a form that is both safe and effective for the body.

The sad fact remains that in spite of all the support from mainstream medical organizations like the American Heart Association and American Diabetes Association, and governmental health entities like the National Institutes of Health, the National Institute on Aging, the USDA and even the U.S. Surgeon General, few of us eat the recommended minimum of two brightly colored fruits and three phytochemical-dense, deep green vegetables daily. Even when counting the "pale" plant foods like French fries, green-gassed bananas and iceberg lettuce, we still don't achieve the minimum!

The reasons for this nutritional void are many and varied, and they are deeply ingrained in our American culture and lifestyle, though it can no longer be attributed to ignorance. What is needed is an educational initiative on the subject, as well as new ways for people to enjoy the benefits of fruits and vegetables. The good news is people can quickly and easily bridge their fruit and vegetable nutritional gap by consuming a super food drink mix. Our poor choices in food must change. Education and the new advances in food technology offer a step in the right direction.

Choosing the Right Green-Food Drink

Quality manufacturers of green-food drink mixes take care to preserve the nutrients naturally found in fruits and vegetables during the various manufacturing processes. These are natural, certified organic, whole foods and they are best consumed as close to their natural environmental state as possible, with as little handling as possible. Always seek products that don't use genetically modified foods and aren't altered using nanotechnology. There are many manufacturing challenges that must be addressed. Heating, for example, is a major concern in manufacturing a green-food product that retains its bioavailability. The manufacturing challenge is to be able to dehydrate the whole foods to stabilize the product without dehydrating it too

much, which could "cook" the product. Because of this potential problem, powder drink mixes remain the most widely recommended form of green-food supplement offered by most health care providers.

Even with the many challenges of creating high-quality green foods, the popularity of these superfoods continues to increase as patients experience their vast health advantages. The biggest reason the green-food drink-mix market continues to expand is the fact that when you drink one, you actually feel the difference.

Take Action

The Standard American Diet (SAD) has given rise to an epidemic of obesity, cardiovascular disease, premature aging and cancer. The message of five to 13 servings of fruits and vegetables daily has gone unheeded. Education and cultural changes must take place.

The "5-A-Day for Better Health" program, sponsored by the National Cancer Institute and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, has made some progress, but changing the eating habits of a nation comes slowly. Gourmet juices, salad bars and the "smoothie" craze are steps in the right direction, but new forms of phytonutrient-dense foods must become mainstays in our diets.

Many doctors today recommend the use of functional foods such as green-food drink mixes that can be included in the dietary fabric of the busy, modern world. People will only eat what they like, so consuming a good-tasting, instant and healthy superfood drink on a daily basis can help bridge the gap between a SAD and an optimal diet. Many doctors have free sample packets available at their office. Be sure to ask your health care provider for a recommendation for you and your family.

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