



Lycopene

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Used for: Prostate cancer prevention and treatment, lowering cholesterol, prevention of atherosclerosis, treatment of human papilloma virus (HPV), treatment of oral leukoplakia.

Best when: Used in conjunction with our Basic Nutritional Protocol. Scientific studies document the synergistic role of vitamin D, fish oils, and a “multi-carotene” (as can be found in a high quality multi-vitamin or taken separately). Obviously eating 5-8 servings of fruits and vegetables per day and at least 10 servings per week of tomatoes serves as the healthiest way to get our nutrients... But this article is called “supplement of the week” for those who aren’t reaching recommended dietary guidelines.

Carotenoids, the family of nutrients found so readily in our fruits and vegetables, provide profound and varied health-promoting qualities. There are six carotenoids known to be important in humans: lycopene, lutein, alpha-carotene, beta-carotene, beta-cryptoxanthin, and zeaxanthin. Epidemiologic data strongly correlates higher levels of these carotenoids with the prevention of almost all of the most common chronic diseases, from macular degeneration to atherosclerosis to all of the common cancers. Although beta-carotene can be converted into vitamin A in the body, these other carotenoids cannot be. Most importantly, the health benefits of lycopene and the carotenoids (sounds like a great band...I digress) comes from a great variety of mechanisms that include antioxidant properties, cholesterol lowering qualities, and the ability to directly interact with our DNA to turn on tumor suppressor genes.

Lycopene specifically has been proven in randomized clinical trials, and in my clinical practice, specifically as part of a “team of nutrients” approach as described above, to treat the following conditions:

- Prostate cancer: Specifically in men with benign prostatic hypertrophy (BPH) and an elevated prostate specific antigen (PSA) lycopene at 30 mg per day can significantly lower the chance of developing prostate cancer.
- Cholesterol reduction: Especially for those who are intolerant of statin medicines or red yeast rice, lycopene at 60 mg per day can lower LDL cholesterol by 14% and more importantly prevent the oxidation of LDL cholesterol which makes it “sticky” and atherogenic.
- HPV treatment: Nutritional interventions with multi-carotenoid supplements combined with 30 mg per day of lycopene can help treat women with “atypical pap smears” without having to go thru painful scarring procedures.
- Oral Leukoplakia: (White lesions of the oral mucous membranes) can be reversed with 15 mg per day of lycopene.

Although the carotenoids and lycopene in specific show great promise for the prevention of lung, ovarian, cervical, colon, and breast cancers these are not yet proven uses for lycopene. If you do not get 5-8 servings of fruits and vegetables per day which includes 10 servings per week of tomatoes, then I strongly suggest incorporating a multi-carotene supplement and/or a phytonutrient supplement (such as Greens First or Nano-Greens) into your daily routine. If you have a family history of atherosclerosis or cancer (especially prostate or breast) consider upping your daily dosage of lycopene to 30 mg per day.

Caveats: Lycopene is exceptionally safe with no known or suspected interactions. Remember that these carotenoids have nothing to do with vitamin A, and to think of lycopene as part of a family of nutrients that work synergistically to promote your health!

Your Journey to Health & Healing,
Gary E. Foresman, MD

References:
Upon Request

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