

JOEL FUHRMAN, MD

You say ‘tomato,’ we say ‘lycopene’

Carotenoids are a family of over six hundred phytochemicals, including alpha-carotene, beta-carotene, lycopene, lutein and zeaxanthin.

Carotenoids are abundant in green and yellow-orange vegetables and fruits and help to defend the body’s tissues against oxidative damage, which is a natural byproduct of our metabolic processes; oxidative damage from free radicals contributes to chronic diseases and aging.

Lycopene is the signature carotenoid of the tomato. The lycopene in the American diet is 85 percent derived from tomatoes.

Lycopene is found circulating in the blood and also concentrates in the male reproductive system, hence its protective effects against prostate cancer. In the skin, lycopene helps to prevent UV damage from the sun, protecting against skin cancer. Lycopene is known for its anti-cancer properties, but did you know that lycopene has also been intensively studied for its beneficial cardiovascular effects?

Many observational studies have made a connection between higher blood lycopene and lower risk of heart attack. For example, a study in men found that low serum lycopene was associated with increased plaque in the carotid artery and triple the risk of cardiovascular events compared to higher levels.

In a separate study, women were split into four groups (quartiles) according to their blood lycopene levels; women in the top three quartiles were 50 percent less likely to have cardiovascular disease compared to the lowest quartile.

A 2004 analysis from the Physicians’ Health Study data found a 39 percent decrease in stroke risk in men with the

highest blood levels of lycopene. Data from an ongoing study in Finland has strengthened these findings with similar results.

One-thousand men had their blood carotenoid levels tested and were followed for 12 years. Those with the highest lycopene levels had the lowest risk of stroke — they were 55 percent less likely to have a stroke than those with the lowest lycopene levels.

Previous data from this same group of men found that higher lycopene levels were associated with lower risk of heart attack as well. A meta-analysis of 12 trials also found that daily supplemental tomato products (approximately 1 cup of tomato juice or 3-4 tbsp. of tomato paste) reduced LDL cholesterol by 10 percent — this effect is comparable to low doses of statin drugs (with no risk of side effects, of course).

Of course, lycopene is not the only nutrient in tomatoes — tomatoes are also rich in vitamins C and E, beta-carotene, and flavonol antioxidants just to name a few.

Single antioxidants usually don’t exert their protective effects alone; we learned this lesson from clinical trials of beta-carotene, vitamin C, and vitamin E supplements, which did not reduce cardiovascular disease risk. It is the interactions between phytochemicals in the complex synergistic network contained in plant foods that is responsible for their health effects, and this is something that we cannot replicate in a pill.

Out of all the common dietary carotenoids, lycopene has the most potent antioxidant power, but combinations of carotenoids are even more effective than any single carotenoid — they work synergistically. Blood lycopene, as

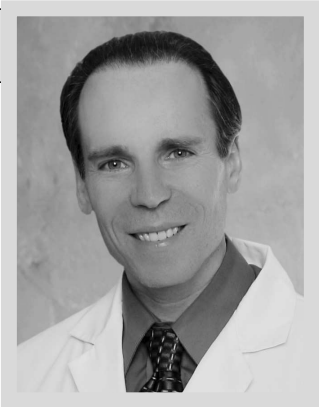
used in many of these studies, is simply a marker for high tomato product intake; similarly high alpha-carotene and beta-carotene levels are markers of high green and yellow-orange fruit and vegetable intake.

Colorful fruits and vegetables provide significant protection.

In a given year, a typical American will eat about 92 pounds of tomatoes.

Be mindful of the sodium content of ketchup and other tomato products — choose the low sodium or no salt added versions. No salt added, unsulfured dried tomatoes are also great. Diced and crushed tomatoes in glass jars are preferable to those in cans, to avoid the endocrine disruptor BPA.

Also keep in mind that carotenoids are absorbed best when accompanied by healthy



fats — for example, in a salad with a seed or nut-based dressing. Lycopene is also more absorbable when tomatoes are cooked — one cup of tomato sauce contains about 10 times the lycopene as a cup of raw, chopped tomatoes — so enjoy both raw and cooked tomatoes in your daily diet.

Dr. Fuhrman is a New York Times best-selling author and board certified family physician specializing in lifestyle and nutritional medicine.

Visit his website at DrFuhrman.com, or submit questions and comments to newsquestions@drfuhrman.com.

Planes, cars and more at this year’s Wings, Wheels

The sixth annual Wings and Wheels aircraft fly-in and car show will be tomorrow, July 4, at the Florence Municipal Airport.

The Old Time Fiddlers will perform, along with two performances by the Florence Dance Guild. There will also be DJ music all day.

The Florence-Siuslaw Lions Club and the Ada Grange will be providing food throughout the day. The Lions Club will be selling raffle tickets to support their scholarship fund with nearly \$3,000 worth of items to be raffled off.

Commemorative t-shirts will be for sale.

Gates will open at 10 a.m. and a donation of \$2 per carload will be asked at the gate. Trophies will be handed out for the car show beginning at 2:30 p.m. Several antique and classic aircraft are expected to be on hand, weather permitting.

Nearly 100 classic cars and trucks from throughout the Northwest are expected to participate.

The Florence Siuslaw Lions Club Presents the 6th Annual

Wings & Wheels

Aircraft fly-in and car show



Special Thanks To

- City of Florence
- Florence Chamber of Commerce

Food Concessions By:

- The Lions Club & ADA Grange

Florence Municipal Airport

Saturday July 4th

10 AM - 3 PM

TROPHIES WILL BE AWARDED AT 3 PM


SUGGESTED DONATION: \$2 PER CAR LOAD

PROCEEDS BENEFIT THE SIUSLAW HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLING TEAM

On-Site Attractions Include:

- U.S Coast Guard, Oregon Coast Military Heritage Museum, Central Oregon Coast Amateur Radio Club, Central Oregon Coast British Car Club, Central Coast Military Vehicle Group, Siuslaw Valley Fire & Rescue, Florence Area RC Aircraft Association & More.





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- Siuslaw News 148 Maple St.
- Best For Hearing 2285 Highway 101
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