

Eat Your Sunscreen, it's delicious!



In light of the recent research showing that sunscreen is actually not protecting our skin from cancer like we thought it was, I thought it would be the perfect time to write an article about the skin protecting benefits of food.

The first time I ever even considered that food could actually protect skin from the sun, was when I was researching the health properties of raspberries for my first cookbook, FAVES. In the cookbook, I highlighted different ingredients that were listed in each of the recipes. For the Raspberry Basil Smoothie, I chose to write about the health benefits and other qualities of raspberries. As I researched, I was astounded to find that one of the magical things about

raspberries (besides their extraordinary flavor) is that their seeds actually have an SPF of 25-50! My brain had to do a bit of a shift when I learned this because I was skeptical. It seemed to me that to protect one's skin from the sunshine, a long-sleeved shirt or a sun-screen would be necessary, something that went over the skin. **The more research I did, the more I found that it was actually true, many foods do have skin protecting qualities.**

Despite my skepticism, the way it works is actually quite simple. UVA and UVB rays can hurt your skin by causing inflammation and forming free radicals. Foods that are anti-inflammatory and antioxidant can protect from this happening. Where it gets complicated, however is in knowing how to ensure those benefits to your skin. How much of these SPF foods should we eat? How long do we need to eat them in order to gain the benefits? How long does the protection last?

Much of this hasn't been studied, but believe it or not, there is some good preliminary research out there. For example, one study showed that eating 40 grams of tomato paste per day offered the benefits of reducing redness, swelling and pain in participants who were exposed to UV rays. The interesting thing is that they didn't see the benefits until they had been eating the tomato paste for ten weeks. If ingesting 40 grams of tomato paste isn't something you want to do everyday for the rest of

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your life, don't worry, lycopene, the antioxidant in tomato paste that offers skin protection isn't the only one that has these benefits. Another study out of Germany showed that drinking chocolate with a high concentration of flavonols, an antioxidant found in cocoa beans, offered skin protection as well. Of course, the darker the chocolate, the greater the benefits.

We don't know yet how long it takes for foods to offer their protections, but we think that the longer we eat foods high in antioxidants, the greater our protections become since the tomato paste study participants actually had more and more protection as the weeks went on.

Betacarotene is another antioxidant that has been shown to have sunscreen properties and may even reverse sun damage.

Ellagic acid, another wonderful antioxidant that blocks the formation of collagen-damaging enzymes can be found in abundance in cranberries and walnuts.

Tocotrienols are another type of nutritive compound that belong to the Vitamin E family. Tocotrienols are actually capable of absorbing UV radiation. Barley, rye, and oats are excellent sources.

Certain plant oils are wonderful at protecting the skin internally and externally, as well. These include carrot seed oil (SPF 30), wheat germ oil (SPF 20) and then the more mild protectors like coconut oil (SPF 4-10), which I like to put on every morning as a sunscreen, and sesame seed oil (SPF 4-10).

And don't forget the berries! All berries are full of nutritional compounds that combat everything from tumor growth to cell degeneration to free radical activity and are one of the best things you can add to your diet to combat any damage potentially caused by UV rays.

Lastly, remember that your body needs sunshine. One of my favorite lines I came across in my research for this article stated:

"Vitamin D supplementation is in order for people who live in areas with long winters and/or who do not take sunbaths."

Don't be afraid of the sun. Eat well, take care of yourself, rub a little coconut oil on your skin and go take a bath in the sunshine. You deserve it!

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For more information visit these sites:

<http://www.life-enhancement.com/magazine/article/588-lycopene-protects-skin-heart-and-more>

<http://www.allure.com/beauty-trends/blogs/daily-beauty-reporter/2013/07/spf-you-can-eat.html>

<http://www.drfranklipman.com/natural-sun-protection/>

<http://www.healthykidscompany.com/blog/spf-and-food-where-to-find-spf-in-the-produce-aisle1>

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