



July 2015

# Asset Health Talk

Keeping your health and wellbeing in the know

## SUNSMARTS:



### RAISE YOUR SPF WITH THESE FOODS

**JULY IS ULTRAVIOLET (UV) SAFETY MONTH**, and we have a new regime to beef up your body's defense against the sun: eating foods that can boost your SPF. Research shows that some foods, such as those rich in antioxidants and omega-3 fatty acids, may help increase your body's natural sun protection factor (aka SPF) by four to five points.

**HOW?** Foods that have antioxidants and omega-3 fatty acids may reduce the oxidizing effect the sun has on your body, both inside and out. When you are exposed to the sun's radiation, molecules in your body become oxidized, or in chemistry terms, oxygen is added to them.

One study shows that a group of research participants reduced their amount of sun damage by consuming an antioxidant-rich beverage. Over a two-week period, two groups of participants were told to be outside in the sun for five to six hours each day. One group was given the antioxidant drink, while the other group drank anything but that. Those who regularly consumed the antioxidant-rich drink had 50% fewer oxidation products in their blood by the end of the study.

One compound in particular that seems to reinforce the skin's defense is carotenoids. Carotenoids are found in red and orange produce like tomatoes, watermelon, carrots and pumpkins, and are also found in your skin. Another study showed when participants ate more foods with carotenoids, they seemed to delay the process of skin erythema, which may be the beginning phases of skin damage that could lead to skin cancer.

Please remember, these edible options are meant to work alongside regular application of sunscreen; wearing sun-protecting gear, such as a hat, cover-up and sunglasses; and not overdoing it in the sun and seeking natural shade often. See what your UV IQ is by taking the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' sun safety quiz online at <http://www.foh.hhs.gov/calendar/july.html>.



**TOMATOES:** The redder, the better! Tomatoes and tomato paste have ample carotenoid components called lycopene.

**DARK CHOCOLATE:** Chocolate fiends, pump the breaks! While experts don't recommend eating more chocolate desserts, anything that has 80% dark chocolate or cocoa is what you're after for its flavonoids, which may help protect against and heal sunburns.



**APPLES:** Whether it's Granny Smith, Fuji or Empire, apples house flavonoids called procyanidins as well as quercetin, which may reduce skin cancer because it protects your DNA.

**GREEN TEA:** This summer, add a bag of green tea to your favorite iced tea. It has a compound called polyphenol that can protect your body from the sun, internally and externally.



"Can Foods Work as SPF?" Joanna Douglas, yahoo.com, May 31, 2015.

"SPF on Your Plate: Researcher Connects the Mediterranean Diet with Skin Cancer Prevention," American Friends of Tel Aviv University, sciencedaily.com, August 17, 2010.

# SPOILER ALERT!

## Americans Toss Out Too Much Produce

### Learn How to Optimize Produce Shelf Life

Tis the season for farmers markets and bountiful produce. You may know how to load up on produce this time of year, but do you know how to make it last? Americans toss a quarter of all produce they buy due to spoilage. Buying fresh produce is an investment in your health; don't let it go to waste.

One of the main contributors to produce gone bad is ethylene gas. It's naturally produced by fruits and veggies in the ripening process. Too much of this gas, however, leads to spoilage. If your produce is spoiling quickly, you may be storing foods with high levels of ethylene gas with foods that are sensitive to it. For example, bananas produce high amounts of this gas so it's best to keep them away from other produce.

While properly storing produce is essential for prolonging its life, there are things you can keep in mind while shopping to keep it in peak condition prior to storage. You can go to the farmers market early to avoid buying food that has been sitting out in the hot sun all day or wait to grab produce at the end of your grocery shopping.



Once you get your produce home, here are some tips for how to store it to increase its longevity:

- Store produce in a clean refrigerator that's 40 F or below. Almost all produce can be refrigerated except bananas, tomatoes, lemons, limes, avocados, nectarines, peaches, pears, plums, potatoes, onions, winter squash and garlic.
- Don't store produce in a sealed bag; it'll speed up decay.
- Avoid storing produce next to sources of heat, such as a stove or toaster. It will accelerate the ripening process.
- Use special produce bags that absorb ethylene gas.
- Store vegetables in the crisper drawer of your fridge.
- Store produce within a couple hours of cutting or peeling it; cut produce spoils faster.
- Store fresh herbs in a jar or vase of water. They'll last longer and provide a decorative

"29 Ways to Keep Fresh Produce Fresher for Longer," Crystal Collins, aqc.com, June 25, 2014.

"Spoiled Rotten—How to Store Fruits and Vegetables," Vegetarian Times, vegetariantimes.com, accessed June 17, 2015.

touch in your kitchen. You can also dry herbs to make them last longer. Loosely tie them together and hang them upside down or dry them in your oven on a low heat.

- It turns out that one rotten apple actually can spoil the whole bunch. If an apple is rotting, toss it immediately to preserve the other apples. And did you know that storing potatoes with apples will keep them from sprouting? Potatoes and apples are a great combination whereas storing potatoes with onions will make them rot faster.

When you buy a bunch of produce for the week, plan to eat more perishable items first, such as berries, leafy greens and herbs. Once produce is getting to the end of its edible life, it's time to get creative by throwing produce into smoothies or roasting vegetables to have on hand for salads and sandwiches.

## Why You Tend to Be HEALTHIER in the Summer



"The Strange Way the Seasons Change Your Genes and Immune System," Amy Capetta, yahoo.com, May 13, 2015.

"People Are Healthier in the Summer (and Here's Why)," Agata Blaszcak-Boxe, livescience.com, May 12, 2015.

### Ever feel healthier

in the summer? That's because you are, and with good reason. A recent study by an international team of researchers revealed that your immune system changes with the seasons and reports the first time medical experts have shown a direct link between climate changes and our genes, including those genes that influence immunity.

Certain diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, rheumatoid arthritis and type 1 diabetes, have been shown in prior research to be linked to seasonal variation. And when the seasons change, so does our blood composition and the way our immune system functions.

### Here's what the researchers

found: The gene ARNTL, which was previously indicated in mice to suppress inflammation, was shown to be more active during summer months. This might help explain why inflammation is greater during the winter.

But something even more surprising was discovered – a group of genes that plays a role in our response to vaccination was more active in the cold months, indicating

that some vaccinations may be more effective if they are received during the winter.

In a study of more than 16,000 blood and fatty tissue samples that were analyzed from people living in the northern and southern hemispheres, researchers learned that thousands of genes were expressed differently (they became active in a cell or tissue) during specific seasons.

Furthermore, the study found that the types of cells discovered in the blood also varied by the season. It was determined that about 25 percent of our genes (5,136 out of 22,822 genes tested) change depending on the time of year.

It's uncertain as to what mechanisms potentially control the seasonal variation, but the variation may have evolutionary origins.

One possible outcome of seasonal variation is that treatment for certain diseases could be more effective if it's tailored to the seasons, according to Mike Turner, head of infection and immunobiology at the Wellcome Trust.