



FOOD MATTERS

with Consultant Nutritionist Sue Radd

TOMATO: THE EVERYDAY SUPERFOOD

Eating more tomatoes daily could make you healthier, protect your skin from sun damage, and lower your risk of modern diseases, according to a review of more than 100 studies.

A large body of evidence already links the consumption of tomatoes and tomato products with lower rates of cancer, especially prostate, but a recent review published in the *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine* highlights potential new selling points for this luscious red fruit: better skin, bone, and brain health.

tomatoes in action

The tomato provides fast nutrients such as vitamin C, vitamin A (as beta-carotene), fiber, and potassium. But it's the uniquely high offering of lycopene and other such phytonutrients that makes it a superfood. Tomato is the richest source of lycopene in the Western diet. Lycopene is a strong antioxidant with a potency many times greater than vitamin E!

Whole tomatoes and tomato products also provide anti-inflammatory and antiblood clotting effects, as they are nature's capsules of multiple active ingredients.

how much should you eat?

In studies of prostate cancer patients, peak blood concentrations were attained within three months of taking

lycopene supplements, reaching a plateau that did not differ significantly among doses of 15–90 mg per day. While earlier studies focused on lycopene supplements, recent evidence shows it's best to use the whole tomato, and a 15 mg daily dose may be good to aim for. How can you obtain this from foods? See the table below.

Processing tomatoes and cooking them with a little oil helps increase absorption of lycopene and other carotenoids into the body.

"Eat a variety of vegetables, especially dark-green and red and orange vegetables and beans and peas," is a key recommendation in the new U.S. dietary guidelines.

Food	Serving	Lycopene (mg)
Tomato paste	¼ cup	18.8
Spaghetti sauce	½ cup	15.8
Tomato puree	¼ cup	13.6
Tomato soup	1 cup	13
Tomato juice	½ cup	11
Stewed tomatoes	½ cup	5.2
Ketchup	1 tbsp	2.5
Raw tomatoes	½ cup	2.3

Nutritionist Sue Radd is the award-winning author of *The Breakfast Book* and coauthor of *Eat To Live*, internationally acclaimed for showing how savvy eating can combat cancer and heart disease and improve well-being. See www.sueradd.com for more nutrition information.