



Maximizing Absorption

Research Update

A lot of the healthful nutrients that vegetables and fruit have to offer are fat soluble, meaning they are carried from food to your body and then transported and saved in your body by fat. Since most produce is very low in fat, you could potentially be missing out on the nutritional benefit of eating nutrient-rich foods if you're not adding fat to them. Fat-soluble nutrients include many phytonutrients, such as the carotenoids beta carotene, lutein, zeaxanthin and lycopene, as well as vitamins A, D, E and K.

Researchers have repeatedly found that eating some fat with fat-free produce (as in combining avocado with fresh salsa, olive oil with salads, or nuts with fresh fruit) can increase an otherwise negligible nutrient absorption several fold. Most recently, researchers tested the absorption of nutrients from a salad of romaine, spinach and carrots with fat-free dressing, and the subjects were found to have absorbed virtually none of the fat-soluble nutrients. Next, the researchers added avocado (a source of heart-healthy monounsaturated fat) to the salad, and the subjects absorbed seven times more lutein and 18 times more beta carotene than they had from eating the fat-free salad.

I'm an advocate of eating balanced meals, meaning that each meal should include some lean protein, some starchy vegetable or intact whole-grain carbohydrate, some vegetable and/or fruit and some healthful fat (such as nuts, olive oil, avocado and fish). This practice is a wholesome way to make sure that you meet all of your nutritional needs—after all, you are what you absorb.

Anti-Aging Eating

- Do you avoid tobacco and tobacco smoke?
- Do you eat mostly whole-grain starches?
- Do you eat fish at least twice a week?
- Do you have a glass of red wine most days?
- Do you avoid trans fats like the plague?

(increasing cancer risk), and even your skin. If your lungs are damaged, then you can't efficiently get oxygen to your muscles and organs and, just as there is no life on earth without oxygen, your life expectancy can be shortened without it.

If you answered yes to all five of these questions, then you may potentially be adding 14 years to your lifespan. Aging gracefully is not just about how you look on the outside (though that often can reflect what is going on inside) – it's about the health of your internal cells and organs, as well as about adding healthy years to your life. Let 2008 be the year you start eating and living to slow the aging process and increase your lifespan.



While there is no evidence that we can actually reverse aging, we do know what accelerates it and, conversely, what can slow it. There are many lifestyle factors that influence the rate at which we age, five of which I have already asked you about. But there are other things, like severe stress, that can really do some damage even if you do everything else right.

Many experts believe that aging is related to problems caused by chronic inflammation that is brought on by stress, abdominal fat, pollution, poor dental hygiene and poor diet. Quelling inflammation, therefore, may be the key to living longer and better.

Slowing aging will really come down to recognizing your own detrimental habits and making changes in those areas. Here's what you need to focus on:

Smoking

Smoking and exposure to second-hand smoke ages every part of you—very quickly. It causes free-radical reactions in your body that damage your lungs, arteries and blood vessels, DNA

Whole grains

Whole grains should be eaten in place of refined and highly processed grains to help slow the aging process. Intact whole grains make your body work harder to break them down into fuel, which means there is a slow release of sugar into your bloodstream instead of a big surge of sugar. Big rushes of sugar can damage some proteins in the bloodstream, which may in turn lead to hastened cellular aging, insulin resistance and inflammation. Also, most whole grains naturally contain about 20 antioxidants, whereas refined grains have all of their nutrients and fiber removed and whole grains keep your digestive system young because they contain prebiotics, which help lay the foundation for good bacteria called probiotics in our digestive tracts. We can grow these bacteria ourselves and get a boost from probiotics that we eat (in yogurt, kefir, kimchi and supplements) to help to populate our guts with friendly bacteria that boost our immune systems and promote

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Damage Control continued...

healthy digestion. The fiber that whole grains provide is also important for keeping our GI tracts young and toned to help reduce constipation.

Fish

Fish, especially wild salmon, tuna, black cod and sardines, are excellent sources of anti-inflammatory fats called omega-3 fatty acids. The anti-inflammatory action of omega-3s helps keep your brain young by protecting your memory and preventing Alzheimer's disease and dementia. These fats are also important for helping you lose abdominal fat and lower your triglycerides. Consider taking a daily high-quality omega-3 supplement of at least 1000 milligrams of EPA and DHA total, even if you eat fish twice a week.

Alcohol

You have probably heard by now that alcohol is good for your heart, since it lowers LDL cholesterol. If you want to slow the aging process, however, red wine is your best bet as it contains a powerful antioxidant that other types of alcohol do not: resveratrol. Resveratrol in red wine switches on an anti-aging enzyme called sirtuin. This enzyme helps stem cells divide more efficiently and with fewer errors, so that cells stay younger and healthier and you live longer. Red wine may also boost immunity, as studies show that those who drink a glass or two daily seem to have fewer colds. Alcohol can raise cancer risk, however, so if your risk for cancer is higher than your risk for heart disease, it's best not to drink at all. Also, if you don't currently drink alcohol, you are advised not to start.

Trans fats

Trans fats are one of the most detrimental substances you could have in your diet if you want to age gracefully—literally. Graceful aging in this sense means staying agile but consuming trans fats make your young and supple arteries and joints rigid and restricted. Eating these fats also encourages the accumulation of belly fat and it is belly fat which promotes the chronic inflammation that damages arteries around the heart and the brain and it is a precursor to many chronic diseases. Foods that contain partially hydrogenated fats contain trans fat, even if they say “contains 0 grams trans fat” on the front of the package, so always read ingredient lists to weed out this nasty fat.

Sugar

Excess sugar in the blood, caused by eating a lot of refined foods or having high blood sugar (as in diabetes or pre-diabetes), can affect your vision, make your skin saggy and wrinkled, make it harder to breathe, blunt your memory, make your joints swell and ache, cause impotence and stiffen your arteries. Blood sugar spikes will accelerate the aging process and cause inflammation, so limiting added sugars and highly refined foods (which act like sugar in your body) can help slow down the aging of your cells.

Calories

Overeating also ages us because it overloads our system with excess sugar – most of what we eat is converted to sugar and then, if it is not used, it is converted to fat for storage. Restricting your calories by 15% (if your weight is holding steady) can have big benefits. It can lower your fasting insulin levels, reduce your core body temperature and lessen DNA damage—three factors that are linked to longevity. Eating fewer calories than you need activates a protein called sirtuin, the same anti-aging protein that is activated by the resveratrol in red wine. Sirtuin is remarkable because it seems to neutralize aging, which gives you the potential to actually live longer. The Okinawans in Japan, who traditionally eat until they are only 80% full, often live to be older than 100. Researchers believe that this custom is one of the keys to their longevity.



Aging gracefully is not just about how you look on the outside — it's about your health and adding healthy years to your life

Produce

Colorful vegetables and fruit contain phytonutrients, which are potent antioxidants that occur in complex combinations in plants. The benefits of these nutrients can't be replicated in supplements or processed foods, so eat at least six servings of vegetables and three servings of fruit a day. Be sure to include dark green leafy vegetables daily (such as kale, chard, turnip greens, collard greens, beet greens, cabbage, escarole, spinach and arugula) to help keep your vision sharp, your bones strong and your thinking clear and focused. Berries can keep you young, too. The deep blue and purple colors in blueberries, blackberries, raspberries and pomegranates keep your blood vessels and arteries young and improve blood flow to your heart. Berries

are also super high in antioxidants that help to fight inflammation, which is good news for your joints, heart and brain. They also help to regulate blood sugar levels.

Sleep

Most of us don't sleep enough, which can accelerate aging. An optimal amount of sleep is seven to eight hours nightly—too little sleep puts you at risk for weight gain, weakened immunity, accidents, poor concentration, inefficiency, heart disease and a shorter lifespan. Plus, when you're exhausted, you're less motivated to care for yourself properly and deal with stressors effectively.

Stress

Chronic stress can be a stealthy ager, since we consider it an intangible yet unavoidable part of life. In reality, it negatively affects both your mind and your body because your nervous, immune and cardiovascular systems are constantly being stimulated. It can cause short-term memory loss and brain atrophy in the long run, as well as cause your hormones to go haywire, and can lead to health problems like heart attacks, insomnia, anxiety, diabetes, obesity and even cancer. Living a youthful life depends greatly on how adaptable you are when stressful situations arise. Learning to “go with the flow” is essential to a quick recovery from all of the curve

Our registered dietitian has a Masters in Public Health. However, she is not a doctor and her nutritional recommendations are general in nature and not tailored to specific health problems. Talk to your physician or other qualified health care practitioners concerning particular health issues or before beginning any nutritional program.

balls that life throws at us. There are some effective ways to actively relax; for example, yoga—a moving meditation—does the job very well. Deep breathing and still meditation are also effective ways to renew yourself after a stressful event. Having a pet has been shown to lower stress levels, so consider becoming a pet parent if you're not one already.

Exercise

I'm sure you already know how important exercise is for slowing aging, but it's always good to be reminded of its benefits. Physical activity helps you stay agile well into old age, so you can keep moving like a young person. It also helps prevent memory loss and adds years to your life (about one and a half years if you walk five days a week and three and a half years if you run instead of walk). If you want the rejuvenating benefits of exercise, then you should be moderately active for at least 30 minutes four or five days a week. If you are currently inactive, start with shorter bouts of exercise and work your way up.

Foods that age you

Partially hydrogenated fats
High fructose corn syrup
Sugar
Margarine
Corn oil
Cottonseed oil
Sunflower oil
Safflower oil
Soybean oil
Peanut oil
Coconut oil
Palm kernel oil
Beef fat
Chicken fat
Shortening
Flour
Refined grains
Energy bars with coatings
Protein bars with coatings
Cakes
Candies
Cookies
Crackers
Chips
Breads
Doughnuts
Muffins
Fried foods
Frozen dinners
Rice mixes
Stuffing mixes
Frozen desserts
Snack foods
Soft drinks
Highly processed foods

Foods that slow aging

Vegetables:

Artichokes
Asparagus
Broccoli
Brussels sprouts
Cabbage
Carrots
Chili peppers
Cucumber
Dark leafy green vegetables
Garlic
Green peppers
Kale
Onions
Orange sweet potatoes
Red bell peppers
Red chili peppers
Spinach
Tomatoes
Tomato products
Winter squash
Zucchini

Fruits:

Apples
Apricots (fresh & dried)
Avocado
Blackberries
Black raspberries
Blueberries
Cantaloupe
Cherries
Cranberries
Dates
Dried apricots
Grape juice

Socialize

Having a network of family and friends who support you and socialize with you is an important factor in living longer and better. A social network helps you deal with life's stressors better, especially if you choose friends who live youthfully and optimistically. Having at least one close confidant is more important than having a group of casual friends, so make sure to cultivate meaningful relationships throughout your life.

Although eating youthful foods and having healthful habits are important for slowing aging, it is your overall diet and lifestyle that will really make a difference. Aging gracefully and slowly is about having a positive attitude and maintaining youthful traits of playfulness, humor and curiosity. Life is an adventure and the best way to extend it is to live purposefully and look forward to each day's journey.

Grapes

Kiwifruit
Mangoes
Oranges
Other citrus fruits
Pineapple
Plums
Prunes
Raisins
Red grapes
Strawberries

Proteins, Beans, and Nuts:

Almonds
Cashews
Fortified eggs
Ground flax seeds
Herring
Mackerel
Pecans
Pistachios
Pumpkin seeds
Salmon
Sardines
Soy beans
Soy nuts
Sunflower seeds
Tofu
Tuna
Walnuts

Fats:

Flax seed oil
Olive oil (Extra virgin first cold pressed)
Walnut oil

Spices:

Basil
Bay leaves
Black pepper
Cayenne pepper
Cinnamon
Curry
Ginger root
Mint
Mustard
Nutmeg
Oregano
Red Pepper
Rosemary
Sage
Thyme
Turmeric root

Whole intact grains:

Barley
Brown rice
Bulgar
Kasha
Oats
Quinoa
Wheatberries
Wild rice

Miscellaneous:

Cocoa (non-alkalized)
Dark chocolate
Green tea
Plain unsweetened yogurt
Red wine

Food of the Month

Olive Oil

What better food for me to feature for the new year than one you should be eating several times a day? That's right, I want you to consume olive oil several times a day to reap its vital benefits.

Olive oil is one of the healthiest oils we can eat due to its optimal ratio of fats: it contains mostly monounsaturated fat, with a little saturated fat and only a tiny bit of polyunsaturated fat. The oil has been widely studied since it is a major component of the Mediterranean diet. It was initially believed that all of the oil's health benefits were due to its fatty acid profile, but now we understand that the antioxidants that occur naturally in the oil are also a major source of protection. Olive oil is rich in phytonutrients, which are believed to protect the heart and brain, lower blood pressure, reduce cancer risk and quell inflammation. Polyphenol phytonutrients in olive oil, such as tyrosol esters and rutin, act as potent antioxidants in our bodies that help protect cells against injury due to oxidation of LDL cholesterol. One specific type of tyrosol ester called oleocanthal acts as an aspirin-like anti-inflammatory to help protect against heart attacks, strokes, certain cancers and Alzheimer's disease. Other polyphenols in olive oil may help prevent free-radical oxidation, as well as lower triglycerides and raise HDL cholesterol. Caffeic acid present in olive oil is a potent antioxidant that may inhibit cancer tumor growth and chronic inflammation.

Olive oil, like all other oils, has 120 calories and 14 grams of fat per tablespoon. It also offers 8% of the Daily Value for vitamin E, another important antioxidant that appears to help prevent blood clots and protect against heart disease.

All of the aforementioned plant nutrients are found in their highest concentrations in extra virgin first cold-pressed olive oil. Some of the nutrients may be found in smaller quantities, if at all, in more refined



olive oils, such as virgin, light, fino, pure and extra virgin oil that is not first cold pressed. (A good way to tell if an oil has retained its protective antioxidants is to taste it and see if it stings the back of your throat a little—that's the oleocanthal.) The "first press" refers to the first pressing of the olives that results in a low acid oil (less than 1%) that meets the standards for acidity that are required for an oil to be considered extra virgin. "Cold pressing" is important because it refers to a simple chemical-free process of extraction that involves only pressure. Other processes that extract the oil often involve heat and/or chemicals that alter the structure and nutritional profile of the oil. Therefore, it is essential to use only the highest grade of extra virgin first cold-pressed olive oil. I also recommend that you choose organic oils, since organic olive oil is made from olives that are grown without the use of pesticides (pesticide residues often find their way into conventionally grown foods). Since pesticides are usually fat soluble, meaning they travel in fat, it's a good idea to make sure all of your fats and oils are organic. Let color and flavor be your guide, too – the deeper colored and more flavorful oils tend to have more antioxidants. Store olive oil in a cool dark place like the pantry for up to six months or in the refrigerator for up to a year (you'll need to bring it to room temperature before you can use it). Never store it near a stove or oven or in direct sunlight. If your oil smells or tastes like paint thinner, do not use it—rancid oils are carcinogenic.

As I mentioned earlier, olive oil is an essential food in the Mediterranean Diet. It even has its own food group on the heart-healthy Mediterranean Diet Pyramid, which recommends that you eat olive oil daily and liberally. It should be the main source of fat in your diet, replacing butter, margarine, lard, partially hydrogenated oils, fatty meats and deep-fried foods. Use olive oil at home for cooking, as a dip for bread, and as a salad dressing. You should never use high heat when cooking with olive oil, so keep your burner on "medium" heat or lower so that the oil doesn't smoke and turn rancid. Most restaurants stock olive oil, so you can request it be used to cook your food when you're eating out. This month, try my recipes for Sautéed Escarole and Long-Life Salmon.

Jessica's January Store Appearances: Body Fat Testing*

Jessica will be offering complimentary body fat testing and answering your questions about weight loss, food and nutrition.

Encino

Monday January 7, 1 pm

Pacific Palisades

Monday January 7, 4:00 pm

West Hollywood

Tuesday January 8, Noon

Dana Point

Saturday January 12, 10:00 am

Irvine

Saturday January 12, 1:00 pm

Newport Beach

Saturday January 12, 3:00 pm

Mayfair Hollywood

Monday January 14, 5:00 pm

Westlake Village

Tuesday January 15, Noon

Valley Village/North Hollywood

Tuesday January 15, 4:00 pm

Tarzana

Friday January 18, Noon

Sherman Oaks

Friday January 18, 4:00 pm

Northridge

Tuesday January 22, Noon

Calabasas

Tuesday January 22, 3:30 pm

Century City

Friday January 25, Noon

Santa Barbara

Saturday January 26, Noon

Pasadena

Monday January 28, Noon

Silver Lake/Los Feliz

Monday January 28, 5:00 pm

Marina del Rey

Thursday January 31, 5:00 pm

*Testing method is Bioelectrical Impedance and is not appropriate for people with pacemakers or osteoporosis, pregnant women or children. Be well-hydrated for most accurate results.

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