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You say tomato, I say Lycopene

Recent research gave pizza lovers the best news that they've had for ages – apparently, eating pizza regularly reduced the risk of oesophageal cancer by 59%, colon cancer by 26% and mouth cancer by 34%.

But with pizza also being high in saturated fat, salt and calories, is it really the pizza itself that gives such astounding health benefits? The answer, unfortunately for the pizza lover, is no; it seems that the magic ingredient is the humble tomato – more particularly a substance called lycopene that is found in tomatoes and gives them their distinctive red colour.

Lycopene is an antioxidant carotenoid, from the same family as beta carotene and is found not only in tomatoes but also in pink grapefruit, watermelon and guava. It has been the subject of many studies over recent times, including a six-year study of 48,000 male health professionals by Harvard Medical School, which found that consumption of tomatoes – the best natural source of lycopene – more than twice a week was associated with a reduced risk of prostate cancer of between 21% and 34%.

Researchers at the University of Illinois found that women with a high lycopene level had a five-fold lower risk of developing precancerous signs of cervical cancer than women with low lycopene levels.

Scientists believe that excess oxidative stress plays an important role in the initiation and promotion of many degenerative diseases and exposure to environmental pollutants (smoking, car fumes, etc) increases oxidative stress beyond the body's ability to cope. Lycopene, because of its antioxidant properties, can help the body's natural defences and so provide protection from oxidative stress.

With their Lycopene Plus, Health Plus – suppliers of quality nutritional supplements – have taken the remarkable lycopene and mixed it with two other major antioxidants vitamin E and selenium, to provide one of the most potent antioxidant products currently available. At a retail price of only £11.95 for 30 vegan capsules or £29.95 for 90 vegan capsules, Lycopene Plus is one of the most cost-effective ways of protecting your health!

Sources

BBC News, 22/7/2003, Eating pizza 'cuts cancer risk', BBC London. Available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/health/3086013.stm>

Lycopene.com, 14/2/2001, Lycopene. Available at <http://www.lycored.com/lycopene.html>.