Nutrition for Family Living

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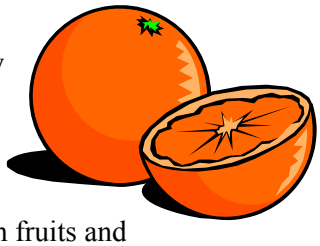
June, 2006 Topics

An orange a day may keep arthritis at bay!

By Hua Jing, Ashley Valentine, and Sherry Tanumihardjo



Background: Phytochemicals are compounds found in plants that may offer significant health benefits. Carotenoids comprise an important subclass of phytochemicals. Among the carotenoids are those that are considered *provitamin A carotenoids*. Our bodies can convert these carotenoids from their original form to vitamin A, an essential nutrient. The three provitamin A carotenoids most commonly found in fruits and vegetables are alpha-carotene, beta-carotene, and beta-cryptoxanthin. Of the health benefits offered by each of these three important carotenoids, the least is known about beta-cryptoxanthin.

Recent Research Findings: Recent population studies show that beta-cryptoxanthin may reduce the risk of developing inflammatory disorders such as rheumatoid arthritis and inflammatory polyarthritis. A study of approximately 29,000 American women aged 55 – 69 years found that intakes of more than 40 micrograms beta-cryptoxanthin per day may be protective against the development of rheumatoid arthritis. No protective effects of other carotenoids, such as beta-carotene or lutein, were found. The ability of beta-cryptoxanthin to protect against inflammatory disease is also supported by a study performed in the United Kingdom of over 25,000 people aged 45 – 75 years. In this study, daily beta-cryptoxanthin intake was found to be significantly lower in people with inflammatory polyarthritis than in people who did not develop the disease. On average, those who developed arthritis consumed approximately 87 micrograms beta-cryptoxanthin per day, while those who did not develop arthritis consumed approximately 140 micrograms per day. The authors of this paper suggest that consumption of one glass (8 ounce) of fresh-squeezed orange juice (approximately two fruits) could account for the difference in beta-cryptoxanthin intakes in the two groups. However, according to beta-cryptoxanthin concentration in oranges as reported by the USDA Nutrient Database, this difference in beta-cryptoxanthin intake is easily accounted for by consumption of just one small orange per day.

An Orange a Day? As our nation's poor dietary habits continue to add inches to the average waistline, individuals, nutritionists, and health professionals continue to seek simple behaviors that we can easily incorporate into our daily lives to help overcome the battle of the bulge. One recent trend started by the commercial and processed foods industries is to offer snacks in smaller, portion-controlled packages that contain roughly 100 calories. This strategy could help control calorie consumption. A second campaign, the 5-A-Day Program, encourages Americans to include more fruits and vegetables, and therefore more fiber, in the daily diet. Fruit and vegetable consumption may reduce overeating due to the satiating effect of fiber and will enhance phytochemical consumption. Fortunately, Mother Nature already provides us with individually-packaged, portion-controlled, juicy, tasty treats that are high in fiber and phytochemicals:

oranges. A large orange packs a mere 86 calories, a significant 4.4 grams of fiber, and a whopping 213 micrograms beta-cryptoxanthin. Oranges are an easy snack to keep on hand since they come prepackaged, easily fit in a backpack, briefcase, or purse, and don't require refrigeration. They are a refreshing choice when aiming to subdue mild hunger and may offer the added benefit of protection against inflammatory diseases due to the high content of beta-cryptoxanthin.

What About Orange Juice? While it is true that many canned or bottled fruit juices are as high in sugars as a non-diet soda, recent reports indicate that consumption of 100% fruit juices, with no added sugars, do not contribute to overweight or obesity. Recent research showed that among 12 – 18 year-olds, those consuming juice had significantly lower body mass indexes than those who did not consume juice. Orange juice offers significantly more vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals (such as vitamin C, potassium, and beta-cryptoxanthin) than do sodas and other sweetened beverages or fruit drinks. While it is generally preferable to consume a whole fruit, as opposed to its juice, because of the fiber in the whole fruit; for the times when a whole orange just isn't practical or preferred, 100% orange juice is a good alternative.

The Bottom Line: Modifying and teaching healthier habits include emphasizing the importance of fruits and vegetables daily. These foods deliver important phytochemicals whose positive impact on health is becoming increasingly clear. Simply eating an orange a day, as a replacement snack for chips, cookies, or other less healthy choices, would be an excellent step toward life-long good nutrition, weight maintenance, and prevention of chronic disease.

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AAP's New Policy Statement and Wisconsin's New State Plan Call for Collaboration to Promote Healthy Lifestyles

By Susan Nitzke

A new Position Statement from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) urges physicians and health care professionals to "encourage, monitor, and advocate for increased physical activity for children and teenagers." Age-appropriate recommendations are included for infants/toddlers, preschoolers, elementary ages, middle schoolers, and adolescents. The Position Statement recommends that families, schools, community recreation leaders and health care professionals work together to ensure that children and youth adopt active, healthy lifestyles. In addition to its focus on physical activity, the AAP Position Statement lists nutritional factors that contribute to increasing obesity rates: insufficient infant breastfeeding, reduction in cereal fiber, fruit, and vegetable intake by children and youth, and excessive consumption of oversized fast foods and soda.

Another new document that promotes healthy lifestyles is our state's new comprehensive plan to prevent obesity and reduce chronic disease. The plan, which was developed by the Wisconsin Partnership for Activity & Nutrition (WI PAN, formerly WINPAW) was officially announced by Governor Doyle on May 12. The new state plan calls for all organizations, communities and individuals in Wisconsin to work together to reduce obesity, improve nutrition and increase physical activity. Active involvement of public and private partners is encouraged to change policies and environments that support healthy eating and physical activity. The plan also encourages families and individuals to take charge of their own behavior.

Implication for Extension Educators:
The AAP Position Statement and the new state plan emphasize the importance of collaboration and cooperation to promote and support healthy lifestyles at the individual, family and community levels. In addition, the Wisconsin Nutrition and Physical Activity state plan provides a framework to help guide Extension program planning and partnership activities in this important area.

Reminder:
Partnership activities and outcomes are included in UW-Extension Cooperative Extension's Planning and Results System. For example, Outcomes #6 and #7 in the Eating Well and Being Active Team's evaluation plan call for information on our work with communities and institutions to address nutrition and physical activity issues. Your Impact Indicator Results, Impact Statements, Individual Statistics and Success Stories will help document the extent of Family Living's collaborative work in promoting healthy lifestyles.

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5 A Day – Change is on the way!

By Heather Harvey

In June 2006, the national 5 A Day program will introduce its new brand and logo. The new brand is "Fruits & Veggies - More Matters!"™. This brand went through significant formative assessment according to Amy Meinen of Wisconsin 5 A Day, and resonated with women, specifically mothers. Part of the reason this brand was chosen was that it applies to all individuals, regardless of how many fruits and vegetables they are currently eating. The logo that will represent the new brand has not been unveiled yet.

While the new brand and logo will not be announced until June 2006, the national 5 A Day program and the Produce for Better Health Foundation are busy working on new print and promotional materials that convey the new brand and message to consumers. Materials will be available starting in 2007.

Implication for Extension Educators:
The national 5 A Day program office has advised that organizations phase out their current 5 A Day materials. They ask that organizations refrain from ordering more 5 A Day products until materials with the new brand are available. To the extent that they are appropriate for WNEP, Produce for Better Health's "Color Way" materials are still being produced and can be used until the new "Fruits & Veggies – More Matters!"™ materials are available.