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New Study: Red Wine Slows the Aging Process

Date Published: Friday, February 2nd, 2007

Over the years, red wine has been celebrated for everything from staving off cancer and gum disease to promoting a healthy heart. Now, a new Spanish study is suggesting that red wine may be effective in slowing the human aging process.

Researchers led by Professor Dario Acuna Castroviejo of the University of Granada, Spain, believe that the high concentration of melatonin in grape skin is responsible for the benefits. Melatonin, a hormone that is naturally produced by the human body (and is available as a dietary supplement in the U.S.), is hailed as an antioxidant that can fight cell-damaging molecules, including those related to aging. Free radicals such as nitrogen and oxygen tend to increase in amount and become more dangerous as people reach the age of 30 and beyond in large part because the human body stops producing sufficient levels of melatonin to fight them.

Melatonin is seen as an effective defense against the potential “age-related damage” that these free radicals can cause. Other melatonin-rich foods that may be beneficial in the fight against aging include oats, corn, cherries, onions, bananas, mint, and rice.

The study, conducted under the auspices of the Spanish Aging Research Network (Red Nacional de Investigacion del Envejecimiento), used genetically altered rodents to test their hypothesis. They found that the mice stopped producing melatonin naturally around the age of five months the equivalent of about 30 human years making their cells much more fragile and susceptible to damage. They also found that the administration of melatonin in these mice worked to neutralize and delay the effects of the oxidative stress and the inflammatory processes associated with aging.

While the substance is readily available in the States (and often used to counteract jet lag), it is still not authorized for over-the-counter sales in many European countries.

This entry was posted on Friday, February 2nd, 2007 at 8:35 pm and is filed under **Health Concerns**. Both comments and pings are currently closed.

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