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A new study has found that consuming melatonin – a natural substance produced in small amounts by humans and present in certain types of food – delays the oxidative damage and inflammatory processes typical of old age.

Alec Holden, it seems, really is onto something. The retired engineer who today celebrated his 100th birthday (winning £25 000 on a wager that he would make it to his century) claims that the key to his longevity was a daily diet of porridge.

And anti-ageing melatonin can be found in small amounts in some fruits and vegetables, like onions, cherries and bananas, and in cereals like corn, porridge oats and rice, as well as in some aromatic plants including mint, lemon verbena, sage and thyme, and in red wine.

Head researcher of the study, physiologist Darío Acuña Castroviejo, says that the first signs of ageing are caused by an increase in free radicals (oxidative stress), which cause an inflammatory reaction – something that melatonin prevents.

In fact, consuming just small amounts of melatonin not only neutralises the oxidative stress caused by ageing, but also delayed its effects, thus increasing longevity, according to researchers from the University of Granada's Institute of Health Sciences.

The team believe that a daily dose of melatonin from the age of 30 or 40 could at least, delay – illnesses related to ageing, free radicals and inflammatory processes, neurodegenerative disorders like Parkinson's disease and complications linked to diabetes.

Being a substance naturally produced by the body, melatonin cannot be patented, so the pharmaceutical industry would not make much profit out of its artificial production. However, Acuña recommends that people should try to increase melatonin consumption through diet.

The results of this study have been published in some of the world's most prestigious journals, such as Free Radical Research, Experimental Gerontology, Journal of Pineal Research and Frontiers in Bioscience.

For more on healthy foods that boost your longevity, [Click Here](#).

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