Overview

- Lycopene belongs to a class of compounds called the carotenoids, which are yellow, orange, and red pigments made by plants.
- The function of carotenoids in plants is to absorb light in photosynthesis, protecting the plant against photosensitization.
- The 5 principle carotenoids found in human plasma from ingesting plants, are: α and β-carotene, β-cryptoxanthin, lutein, and lycopene.
- American lycopene intake averages at about 3.1-3.7 mg/d. In contrast, British intake averages 1.1 mg/d and that for Finns is even lower at 0.7 mg/d.

Lycopene is what gives tomatoes, pink grapefruit, watermelon, and guava their red color. Tomato and tomato products are the single best source of lycopene.

Where is Lycopene found?

Some examples of tomato products high in lycopene are: tomato paste, tomato puree, tomato soup, tomato juice, and marinara sauce. Lycopene can also be found in watermelon, pink grapefruit, baked beans and sweet red pepper.

80% of the lycopene in the US diet comes from tomatoes and tomato products like tomato sauce, tomato paste, and ketchup.

Proposed Health Effects

Lycopene may impact:
- Prostate Cancer
- Digestive Tract Cancers
- Bladder, Cervical, Breast, and Lung Cancers
- Cardiovascular Disease
- Also, functional capacity in the elderly and in immune function.