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a7. Phytochemicals; more good foods

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Taken from Newspaper articles

Have you counted your Flavonoids lately? You would have if you'd been following the latest nutritional trend, the Phytochemical or phytonutrient diet. To hear its advocates talk, this is the culinary equivalent of a miracle drug. Supposedly it can slow the aging process; boost immunity; prevent, slow or even reverse cancer; and strengthen the heart and circulatory systems.

“Phytochemicals are, in a sense, the vitamins and minerals of the 21st century,” say Mark Messina, a soy foods expert and former researcher with the US National Cancer Institute's Diet and Cancer Branch.

Phytochemicals are chemicals that come from plants (“phyto” is Greek for “plant”), and the Phytochemical diet leans heavily on fruits, vegetables, and grains, always a good recipe for a more healthful diet. Phytopian cuisine nudges meat to the side of the plate, not off it.

To understand the concept of the diet, it helps to know a bit about some of the chemicals with names that sound like solvents, but whose nutritional value is, apparently, unparalleled:

Carotenoids: A family of powerful antioxidants that are also pigments in plants. Carotenoids appear to play an anti-cancer role and bolster the immune system; they also may play a role in heart health.

Flavonoids: Found in fruits, vegetables, wine and tea, especially green tea, Flavonoids are thought to defend against carcinogens, curb LDL - the “bad” cholesterol - and prevent blood clots.

Genistein: Abundant in soy foods. It may be a significant anti-cancer force, particularly against such diseases as breast cancer. It also may protect against cardiovascular disease.

Quercetin: A more potent antioxidant than vitamin E, according to some research. Onions are the richest source; it's also found in wine and tea. Among other functions, it may block carcinogens as well as slow the growth of cancer cells.

All of these can be found in supplemental form and some companies combine them in one product.