

Does Resveratrol Extend Ones Lifespan?

Resveratrol is a phytonutrient molecule whose time has come. It is a polyphenolic phytoalexin present in grape skins and red wine that has been shown to have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. Resveratrol has potent antioxidant and anti-tumorigenic activities as well as important protective effects on the nervous system and more.

This component of red wine has been found to inhibit the proliferation of a variety of human cancer cell lines, including those from breast, prostate, stomach, colon, pancreatic, and thyroid cancers. More recently, reports on the potential for resveratrol to inhibit the development of cancer and extend lifespan in cell culture and animal models have continued to generate scientific interest.

Clinical trials are currently underway to address this question and to also determine whether resveratrol might be beneficial in cancer treatment. There is an extensive and growing amount of work devoted to the possible links between diet and a reduction in the risk of breast cancer as well as other forms of cancer. Recently, reports have come in that resveratrol could inhibit a number of cellular events associated with the initiation, promotion, and progression of cancer.

Researchers at the Harvard Medical School and the National Institute on Aging report that a natural substance found in red wine, known as resveratrol, offsets the bad effects of a high-calorie diet in mice and significantly extends their lifespan. Research at the Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine and Ohio State University indicates that resveratrol has direct inhibitory action on cardiac fibroblasts and may inhibit the progression of cardiac fibrosis. Furthermore, researchers discovered that the liver and other systems in obese mice remained healthy (when they should not have) and fat related deaths dropped thirty one percent for those mice given a resveratrol supplement.

Research by Harvard Medical School Professor of Pathology David Sinclair, MD has shown that resveratrol extends the life span of mice by up to twenty four percent and the life span of other animals by as much as fifty nine percent. Another way this research differs from earlier work is that it looks specifically at the expression of genes known to be affected by aging in several important tissue types. The group explored the influence of the agent on heart, muscle and brain by looking for changes in gene expression in those tissues.

Insulin and glucose levels in mice on the high fat plus resveratrol diet were closer to the mice on standard diet than to the mice on the high fat diet. Resveratrol again demonstrated changes associated with longer lifespan, including increased insulin sensitivity, reduced insulin like growth factor-1 levels, increased AMP activated protein kinase and peroxisome proliferator activated receptor-gamma coactivator 1alpha activity, increased mitochondrial number, and improved motor function. But, in contrast resveratrol treatment had no significant effect on body weight, serum cholesterol, radial bone growth, epithelial cell height, or messenger RNA levels for insulin-like growth factor I.

Resveratrol supplements on the market today may contain anywhere from 10 to 150 mg of resveratrol per pill, but the effective doses for chronic disease prevention in humans are not known. Resveratrol is not known to be toxic or cause adverse effects in humans, but there have been only a few controlled clinical trials to date. However since there aren't studies in humans, it's impossible to say how much resveratrol is needed to create health benefits.

The amount of resveratrol in food varies greatly. Of course, understanding exactly how procyanidins work in the human body remains to be investigated, and the researchers plan to dose people with the compound in a future clinical trial. Resveratrol is a good antioxidant in any potency to help reduce oxidative stress, improving the immune system, cardiovascular system, and all other parts of the body that benefit from antioxidants.

About the Author

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