

# Lycopene: A Simmering Debate

By Bryon Verhaeghe

The word lycopene often makes us think of red tomatoes. There are reports that lycopene can improve our health and in this article we will explore some of the beneficial properties of lycopene.

The health benefits were first noticed in studies showing that men in Italy have the lowest rate of prostate cancer in the world. Details of their diet found that this was due to the lycopene consumed. These findings created an interest to continue further research and interesting properties about lycopene were discovered.

It was found that the human body absorbs lycopene only when foods with lycopene are heated in the presence of a lipid or protein. The heat makes the lycopene molecule 'active' enabling it to bind to the protein or lipid. This activation and binding is essential in order for the body to absorb the lycopene into the blood stream. If the lycopene is not bound to a protein or lipid it cannot be absorbed and used by the body.

White light contains all colors and we see separate colors when they are reflected to our eyes. The lycopene develops its deep red color because the size of the molecule allows it to actually absorb blue light that other molecules can only

reflect. Lycopene happens to also absorb UV rays and protects our cells from the damage of UV radiation. This unique property of lycopene is a major component of our immune system. The eyes, liver, skin and breasts contain enough lycopene to protect us from disease. Studies find that high blood levels of lycopene relate to better vision, fewer cataracts, and lower rates of skin cancer.



Producers cannot ship field ripened tomatoes because they are soft and would spoil before reaching the retail stores. Therefore raw tomatoes are picked and shipped green, and ethylene gas is used to turn them red. On the other hand, canned tomatoes are picked fully field ripened with significantly higher levels of lycopene. What some people believe is that vine ripened tomatoes are ripened in the field, but actually they are picked green and gassed for shipping. Tomatoes can only develop their lycopene levels by ripening on the plant in the field.

Foods with Lycopene	mcg/100gm
Green tomatoes, raw*	0
Cherries, raw*	0
Strawberries, raw*	0
Tomatoes fresh/raw*	2,573
Pink grapefruit, raw*	2,767
Tomato field ripened, cooked	3,041
Tomato field ripened, canned, stewed	4,088
Watermelon, raw*	4,532
Guavas, raw*	5,204
Canned tomato sauce	13,979
Tomatoes canned puree, with salt added	21,754
Canned tomato paste	28,764
Tomatoes, sun dried	45,902
Tomato powder	46,260

*\* note: these foods are normally eaten raw and so the lycopene is not absorbed*

To summarize, red color does not necessarily mean that there is lycopene present as many red foods do not contain lycopene (see table). The key issue is that lycopene must be activated with heat for the body to be able to absorb it.

At Rebound Health we are continuously engaged in research to provide accurate information. Our goal is to educate our clients in obtaining optimal health. We will tailor an individual diet plan and a customized supplement routine for your health issues. We offer consultations and take the time to address your concerns in a friendly and relaxed manner. Meetings can be arranged by calling 2544-4055 or email us at [info@reboundhealth.com](mailto:info@reboundhealth.com).

# Natural UV Protection



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