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By: Gabriel Gache, Science News Editor

Forget Viagra, Eat Watermelon

Same results, no side-effects



Watermelons contain the cure for a lot of health problems
square-watermelons

According to a new study carried out at the College Station's Texas A&M Fruit and Vegetable Improvement Center, the watermelon could soon take Viagra producing companies out of business since it contains chemicals that have effects similar to those of the blue pill, thus increases libido. "The more we study watermelons, the more we realize just how amazing a fruit it is in providing natural enhancers to the human body. We've always known that watermelon is good for you, but the list of its very important healthful benefits grows longer with each study," said Dr. Bhimu Patil, the leader of the study. Watermelons are part of a great variety of fruit and vegetables containing so-called bioactive compounds, also known as phyto-nutrients, able to determine healthy body responses. Lycopene, beta carotene and citrulline are only few of the well known compounds found in watermelons and are catalogued as bioactive chemicals. Citrulline for example, is able to relax blood vessels, which is exactly what Viagra does. As citrulline is metabolized it is transformed into arginine, an amino acid that helps improve the health of the circulatory system and that of the immune system. Better still, the consumption of watermelons has no side effects, although it has the disadvantage of not being as target specific as Viagra. "The citrulline-arginine relationship helps heart health, the immune system and may prove to be very helpful for those who suffer from obesity and type 2 diabetes. Arginine boosts nitric oxide, which relaxes blood vessels, the same basic effect that Viagra has, to treat erectile dysfunction and maybe even prevent it," Patil added. Additionally, arginine improves the removal of ammonia and a whole range of other toxic chemicals from the system, thus helping the urea cycle of the body. The only problem is that citrulline is not commonly found in the fleshy parts of the watermelon, therefore it doesn't usually enter the digestive system. Certain species of watermelon, the study found, also have larger concentrations of lycopene than tomatoes. "Lycopene, which is also found in red grapefruit, was historically thought to exist only in tomatoes. But now we know that it's found in higher concentrations in red watermelon varieties. Previous tests have shown that lycopene is much better absorbed from tomatoes when mixed in a salad with oily vegetables like avocado or spinach. That would also apply to the lycopene from watermelon, but I realize mixing watermelon with spinach or avocados is a very hard sell," Patil said. Lycopene is an anti-oxidant with beneficial effects on the heart, prostate and skin, and requires certain fats in order to be better absorbed into the body. Since tomatoes are generally eaten in salads or oily mixes, it's not hard to understand why the compound is better absorbed from them. "One final bit of advice for those Fourth of July watermelons you buy. They store much better uncut if you leave them at room temperature. Lycopene levels can be maintained even as it sits on your kitchen floor. But once you cut it, refrigerate. And enjoy," he said.