

Lycopene a possible weapon against osteoporosis, study finds

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CANADIAN researchers have found that drinking two servings of tomato juice per day can help protect against osteoporosis, thanks to its content of the antioxidant, lycopene.

In a pilot study, researchers from St Michael's Hospital in Toronto and the University of Toronto, Canada asked postmenopausal women aged between 50 and 60 to stick to a diet free of lycopene for one month, and then given two daily servings of either normal tomato juice, lycopene-rich tomato juice, lycopene capsules or placebo capsules for four months.

They then compared the effects on chemical signs of bone loss in the women. Women taking lycopene from either juice or pills had lower levels of the chemical by-product associated with osteoporosis.

Lycopene is a powerful antioxidant that has already been associated with the prevention of cardiovascular diseases and cancer.

The study was funded by companies and organisations including Heinz, Kagome, LycoRed, Millenium Biologix and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

While optimistic about their findings, the scientists involved suggested that further studies with larger sample sizes are needed to determine if lycopene is capable of decreasing osteoporosis risk.