



5. Lucky Star Pilchards are full of Lycopene

Lucky Star Pilchards are canned in sauce, one a chilli sauce and tomato, the other a plain tomato sauce. What is significant about this is that tomatoes have within them a substance called **lycopene** and lycopene has some very special qualities that are beneficial to us.

Let us try, first of all, to explain what lycopene is. It is a red, fat-soluble colouring or pigment found in vegetables. There are other such natural pigments ranging from the bright yellow in squash to orange in carrots and the autumn rust in oak leaves plus many more - they are called carotenoids. The one we are talking about, lycopene, is the bright red found in sweet peppers and in tomatoes.

The body itself does not produce lycopene but it is readily available through what you eat. Minor sources of it are guava, rosehip, watermelon and pink grapefruit; however, the major source is tomato and its derivatives, such as juice, soup, sauce and paste. A diet rich in carotenoid-containing foods is associated with a number of health benefits. **Lycopene** is special in that it is more readily absorbed by our bodies than most other carotenoids: it is deposited widely in the liver, lungs, prostate gland, colon and skin. Studies have shown that patients with HIV infection, inflammatory diseases, high cholesterol levels may have depleted lycopene blood levels. It seems that level of lycopene are not adversely affected by smoking or alcohol intake but rather they are adversely affected by increasing age.

A diet that is rich in lycopene lowers risk of chronic diseases such as heart diseases, cancer and age-related eye degeneration. Where heart problems are concerned, it limits the bad cholesterol that leads to a hardening of the arteries and artery disease. If you have a high level of **lycopene** you are half as likely to suffer heart attacks as those with low levels.

Researchers have found a strong relationship between your lycopene intake and a reduced risk of cancer of the prostate gland and the pancreas. Should you consume lycopene products at least twice a week, you will reduce your possibility of prostate cancer by 34%, shows a study conducted by the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. Studies also show that a high intake of lycopene-rich tomato products is associated with a reduced risk of developing cancers of the lung, breast, cervix and the gastrointestinal tract.

Strangely enough, lycopene is more easily absorbed by the body if it has been processed in some way. An uncooked tomato, for instance, will not provide as much lycopene as one that has been cooked in some sort of fat such as olive oil in spaghetti sauce.

Lucky Star Pilchards are canned in sauces that are rich in lycopene.

