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September 04, 2008

Can Some Types of Dietary Fiber Extend Your Life?

While life–extension research often centers upon some of the most cutting–edge procedures in biotechnology, recent research indicates that even some incredibly **simple** nutritional strategies may have the ability to extend lifespan as well.

A recent study published in the *British Journal of Nutrition* was the first ever to show that **supplementation with two simple dietary fibers, inulin and oligofructose, extended the lifespan of test animals by over 30%**.

[Study Link – Effects of lifelong intervention with an oligofructose–enriched inulin in rats on general health and lifespan.](#)

In the above study, researchers tracked 60 male and 60 female 3–month old rats. Half of the animals in each group were fed the standard control diet, and half a diet enriched with the prebiotic fibers inulin and oligofructose.

In the group receiving the inulin and oligofructose, the researchers noted a significant **decrease** in bodyweight, cholesterol, and triglycerides. And, as relates to lifespan, the researchers found:

After 18 months:

- **None of the rats receiving the additional fiber had died.**
- **15% of the rats in the control group had died**

After 24 months:

- **38% of the rats receiving additional fiber had died.**
- **59% of the rats in the control group had died.**

All told, male and female rats receiving the fiber mixture exhibited an average increase in



lifespan of over 34%.

How Could Prebiotic Fibers Increase Lifespan?

Unlike some other types of dietary fiber, inulin and oligofructose are known as *prebiotics* – a term coined relatively recently to connote types of fiber which encourage the growth of certain types of beneficial bacteria in the intestines. Not all types of fiber have this effect, but inulin and oligofructose are two of the most potent prebiotics known – our first clue as to the potential mechanism of their effectiveness in increasing lifespan.

In aging, many factors can cause the level of beneficial bacteria like *lactobacillus* and *bifidobacteria* to decline, which leaves other bacteria free to run amok in the GI tract. Many of these other bacterial species are known to produce toxic metabolites like indoles, phenols cresol, amines and ammonia from the foods we eat. ***In the absence of lactobacillus and bifidobacteria, the relatively harmful bacteria can multiply unabated, producing an ever-increasing amount of these toxic metabolites.***

A Brief Word on Internal Cleansing and Detoxification

Many conventional physicians and health authorities still scoff at the idea that “normal” bowel bacteria produce toxins in sufficient amounts to impact health, but the research is accumulating indicating that this is indeed the case. In addition to the research linked above, we previously showed you research by the Soviet gerontologist VV Frolkis, who was able to similarly increase the lifespan of the rats he studied by adding the highly adsorptive substance, activated charcoal, to their diets.

Internal Cleansing - The Truth About The Most Controversial Subject in Natural Health

And considering that ***neither*** prebiotic fibers ***nor*** charcoal are even absorbed into the bloodstream, and that ***both*** act to lessen the burden of known intestinal toxins (prebiotic fibers by increasing the “good bacteria,” and charcoal by latching on to the toxins directly), it’s reasonable to assume that the life-extending capacity of both substances is directly related to some sort of “detoxifying” effect.

It should be noted too, that while intestinal toxins do exist, many common herbal and nutritional “detox” products sold as dietary supplements often contain only stimulatory herbs, destined to impart little more than a laxative-effect. Such products often do little to actually restore bacterial balance in the intestines, or to minimize toxic exposure in the long-term. These products could actually make the situation worse, as the intestines often become sluggish after chronic stimulation with such laxatives.

Life Span Studies

In medicine and nutrition, it’s easy to place entirely ***too much emphasis*** on ***markers*** of health and disease – those numbers on a blood test or lab report which we, or our physician, often try to coax into the “normal” range by any means necessary.

As a perfect example, recent research has raised concerns that a popular cholesterol-lowering drug combination ***may not*** prevent heart-disease risk, and may even be associated with an ***increased incidence of cancer***. Such findings should give us fair warning of the dangers of becoming too myopically focused on our levels of mere biological markers like cholesterol.

Article Link – Cholesterol Drug Zetia Doesn't Benefit Health: Study

Quote from the above study:

The long-awaited results of a trial of Zetia, a cholesterol-lowering drug prescribed to about a million Americans, shows the drug confers no medical benefit to users.

In fact, the pace at which artery-clogging plaques formed within vessels almost doubled in patients taking Zetia (ezetimibe) along with another cholesterol-lowering drug, Zocor (simvastatin), compared to those taking Zocor alone, the study found.

Study Link – Intensive Lipid Lowering with Simvastatin and Ezetimibe in Aortic Stenosis.

Quote from the above study:

| *Cancer occurred more frequently in the simvastatin–ezetimibe group (105 vs. 70, $P=0.01$).*

The ability to be blindsided by such unforeseen effects when addressing only disease **markers** is why life span studies are among the most valuable in nutritional research – they help us to answer the only health question most of us **really** care about – what steps can I take to live a long, healthy, vibrant life?

In life span studies, when animals in one group begin to die prematurely and animals in the treatment group live significantly longer, this can give us some truly meaningful clues about the nature of aging in general, as well as clues about which foods and nutritional supplements truly **deliver** on their promise of supporting health, and which ones are just driven by speculative hype.

And the research keeps becoming clearer – prebiotic fibers, precisely because they support healthy microbial balance in the intestines, may be able to support our health in ways few people have previously imagined. Far from just supporting gastrointestinal health, such fibers may be a useful cornerstone of any nutritional program designed to forestall the ravages of aging.

Note: Integrated Supplements Fiber Balance™ contains both inulin and oligofructose, along with Fibersol 2®, and beta glucan from oats – all fiber sources carefully chosen for their ability to support a healthy microbial balance in the intestines.

Related Articles:

[Fiber Balance Q&A - Part 1](#)

[What You Don't Know About Fiber May Be Hazardous To Your Health - Fiber Balance Q & A Part 2](#)

[30 Grams of Fiber Per Day Lowers Marker of Heart Disease Risk, C-Reactive Protein](#)

[Rule #1 For Successful Cleansing and Weight Loss - And Why Some Fasting Protocols and Cleansing Diets May Do More Harm Than Good](#)

[Step 2 For Successful Cleansing And Weight Loss - Support Detox With Quality Protein and Dietary Fiber](#)

[A Nutritional Solution to Pain and Inflammation Part 3 - Inflammation and The Leaky Gut](#)

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