

Scientists study the 'apple a day' theory

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California scientists say they've determined just how an apple a day might be able to keep the doctor away.

The University of California-Davis researchers have discovered one way in which flavonoid-rich apples inhibit the kinds of cellular activity that lead to the development of chronic diseases, including heart disease and age-related cancers.

"We've known for a long time that it's the flavonoids in fruits that are protecting the body. We just haven't known exactly how," said Eric Gershwin, professor of allergy, rheumatology and immunology at the UC-Davis School of Medicine. "Now, at least in the case of apples, we have a good idea about what's going on."

Gershwin and his colleagues found apple extract is able to protect cells from damage and death by interfering with communication between cells.

Earlier studies showed flavonoids -- found in chocolate and green tea, as well as other fruits and vegetables -- behave as anti-oxidants, taking up free oxygen radicals that can damage DNA. The UC Davis study takes that research further by looking beyond the antioxidant effects of apple flavonoids.

The study appears in the latest issue of the journal *Experimental Biology and Medicine*.

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