

Polishing the apple's popular image as a healthy food

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Scientists are reporting the first evidence that consumption of a healthful antioxidant substance in apples extends the average lifespan of test animals, and does so by 10 percent. The new results, obtained with fruit flies — stand-ins for humans in hundreds of research projects each year — bolster similar findings on apple antioxidants in other animal tests. The study appears in ACS's *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*.

Zhen-Yu Chen and colleagues note that damaging substances generated in the body, termed free radicals, cause undesirable changes believed to be involved in the aging process and some diseases. Substances known as [antioxidants](#) can combat this damage.

Fruits and vegetables in the diet, especially brightly colored foods like tomatoes, broccoli, blueberries, and apples are excellent sources of antioxidants. A previous study with other test animals hinted that an apple antioxidant could extend average lifespan. In the current report, the researchers studied whether different apple antioxidants, known as polyphenols, could do the same thing in fruit flies.

The researchers found that apple polyphenols not only prolonged the average lifespan of fruit flies but helped preserve their ability to walk, climb and move about. In addition, [apple](#) polyphenols reversed the levels of various biochemical substances found in older [fruit flies](#) and used as markers for age-related deterioration and approaching death. Chen and colleagues note that the results support those from other studies, including one in which women who often ate apples had a 13-22 percent

decrease in the risk of heart disease, and polish the apple's popular culture image as a healthy food.

More information: "Apple Polyphenols Extend the Mean Lifespan of *Drosophila melanogaster*", *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*.

Provided by American Chemical Society

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