

Can eating tomatoes lower the risk of stroke?

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Eating tomatoes and tomato-based foods is associated with a lower risk of stroke, according to new research published in the October 9, 2012, print issue of *Neurology*, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology.

Tomatoes are high in the antioxidant lycopene.

The study found that people with the highest amounts of lycopene in their blood were 55 percent less likely to have a stroke than people with the lowest amounts of lycopene in their blood.

The study involved 1,031 men in Finland between the ages of 46 and 65. The level of lycopene in their blood was tested at the start of the study and they were followed for an average of 12 years. During that time, 67

men had a stroke.

Among the men with the lowest levels of lycopene, 25 of 258 men had a stroke. Among those with the highest levels of lycopene, 11 of 259 men had a stroke. When researchers looked at just strokes due to [blood clots](#), the results were even stronger. Those with the highest levels of lycopene were 59 percent less likely to have a stroke than those with the lowest levels.

"This study adds to the evidence that a diet high in fruits and vegetables is associated with a lower risk of stroke," said study author Jouni Karppi, PhD, of the University of Eastern Finland in Kuopio. "The results support the recommendation that people get more than five servings of [fruits and vegetables](#) a day, which would likely lead to a major reduction in the number of strokes worldwide, according to previous research."

The study also looked at [blood levels](#) of the [antioxidants](#) alpha-carotene, beta-carotene, alpha-tocopherol and retinol, but found no association between the blood levels and risk of [stroke](#).

Provided by American Academy of Neurology

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