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New research shows that anthocyanin consumption may be associated with a decreased risk of type-2 diabetes.

FLAVONOIDS AND THE RISK OF TYPE-2 DIABETES

Flavonoids are found in plants and serve as pigments to help attract pollinators, filter out UV light, help in nitrogen fixation, and several other roles. An important class of flavonoids is anthocyanins. Anthocyanins are powerful antioxidants and can be found in blueberries, bilberries, raspberries, grapes, and many other plants. In addition to their antioxidant capacity, data also supports a beneficial effect of anthocyanins on insulin sensitivity. However few studies have looked at their effect on type-2 diabetes.

An article published this month in *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* looked at the relationship between flavonoids and type-2 diabetes. Researchers analyzed data from 70,359 women in the Nurses' Health Study, 89,201 women in the NHS II, and 41,334 men in the Health Professionals Follow-Up Study. The mean age of the participants was 50, and all of the individuals examined were free of diabetes at baseline. Follow-up revealed that 12,611 cases of diabetes had developed since initial screening. Participants were asked how often, on average, they consumed different foods. Flavonoid content in each of the foods was analyzed to determine total flavonoid intake. Flavonoid intake was also broken down into five subcategories, they were: flavonols, flavones, flavanones, flavan-3-ols, and anthocyanins. The researchers found that anthocyanin consumption was associated with a decreased occurrence of type-2 diabetes. These results were observed consistently across all three study groups examined.

In addition to regular exercise and maintaining a healthy weight, a diet in flavonoid-rich fruits and vegetables may be a beneficial strategy to help lower the risk of type-2 diabetes.

Wedick NM, Pan A, Cassidy A, et al. Dietary flavonoid intakes and risk of type 2 diabetes in US men and women. The American journal of clinical nutrition. 2012;95(4):925-33.