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Nutritional Super Heroes - Mostly!

Say it isn't so! Resveratrol, long touted as the magic ingredient in red wine (and grapes and dark chocolate) that confers health benefits, does not actually reduce cancer or heart disease nor prolong life. A 9-year study of almost 800 Tuscans in Italy found that resveratrol consumption had no impact on health markers. The bottom line? Enjoy red wine, in moderation, because you like it – not for health benefits!

Green Tea Benefits

Green tea is a nutritional super hero that is living up to its hype. Researchers in Switzerland were looking at the impact of green tea consumption on cognitive function and found that it improves memory. It appears to work by increasing the connectivity between lobes of the brain, improving its ability to perform tasks. And, it is hoped that this news can lead to treatments for the cognitive impairment that can come with disorders such as dementia.

Omega-3s Help Reduce Risk

More evidence of the benefits of long-chain omega-3 PUFAs (poly-unsaturated fatty acids) is surfacing. Typically found in fish, these compounds have already demonstrated cardiovascular benefits, but now they're linked to a reduced risk of type 2 diabetes. Results of previous studies have been conflicting, but a large meta-analysis of 12 studies grouped together, involving over 400,000 patients, has shown a 33% reduction of diabetes risk.

Melatonin Benefits

Melatonin is frequently used to try to improve insomnia or to reset the circadian rhythm in those suffering from jet lag. Now, some evidence is showing that it may have some benefits for shift workers – enabling almost half-an-hour extra sleep during the day after a night shift. This may seem small, but the benefits do add up. The study also noted that caffeine consumption and naps improved alertness during the night shift.

Most of the evidence for alternative therapies is lacking and it can be exceptionally hard to get the hard facts. Your pharmacist has access to the most up-to-date information and can help you assess the pros and cons.