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Watermelon is nature's Viagra!

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If you thought watermelon is just a fruit that refreshes parched throats, here's something you should know - the juicy fruit has ingredients that deliver Viagra-like effects to the body's blood vessels and may even increase libido.

The finding results from a study led by an Indian researcher in US. "The more we study watermelons, the more we realize just how amazing a fruit it is in providing natural enhancers to the human body," said Dr. Bhimu Patil, director of Texas A&M's Fruit and Vegetable Improvement Center. "We've always known that watermelon is good for you, but the list of its very important health benefits grows longer with each study," he added.

Beneficial ingredients in watermelon and other fruits and vegetables are known as phyto-nutrients, naturally occurring compounds that are bioactive, or able to react with the human body to trigger healthy reactions, Patil said. In watermelons, these include lycopene, beta carotene and the rising star among its phyto-nutrients – citrulline, whose beneficial functions are now being unraveled. It has the ability to relax blood vessels, much like Viagra does.

Scientists know that when watermelon is consumed, citrulline is converted to arginine through certain enzymes. Arginine is an amino acid that works wonders on the heart and circulation system and maintains a good immune system, Patil said. "The citrulline-arginine relationship helps heart health, the immune system and may prove to be very helpful for those who suffer from obesity and type 2 diabetes," said Patil. "Arginine boosts nitric oxide, which relaxes blood vessels, the same basic effect that Viagra has, to treat erectile dysfunction and maybe even prevent it," he added.

While there are many psychological and physiological problems that can cause impotence, extra nitric oxide could help those who need increased blood flow, which would also help treat angina, high blood pressure and other cardiovascular problems.

"Watermelon may not be as organ specific as Viagra, but it's a great way to relax blood vessels without any drug side-effects," Patil said.

The benefits of watermelon don't end there, he said. Arginine also helps the urea cycle by removing ammonia and other toxic compounds from our bodies. Citrulline, the precursor to arginine, is found in higher concentrations in the rind of watermelons than the flesh.

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