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## NEWS

# LYCOPENE MAY WARD OFF ORAL CANCER

Indulging in tomato sauce and other lycopene-rich foods— such as watermelon, guava and pink grapefruit—may help ward off oral cancer, according to a study in the July issue of the journal Oral Oncology.

Researchers studied 58 patients diagnosed with leukoplakia, the most common precancerous lesion, which appears as white patches in the mouth that are associated with tobacco use.

One group of patients received 8 milligrams of lycopene each day, a second group received 4 mg a day, and a third group received placebos. They were evaluated every seven to 10 days during the three-month study and every 15 days during a two-month follow-up period.

Patients who received either dose of lycopene, especially the higher-dose group, showed highly significant improvement in their oral health compared with the group that received the placebo. Researchers theorize that lycopene is a promising antioxidant that can be used to treat oral leukoplakia and protect cells against damage and progression of precancerous cells toward cancer.

## FOOTNOTES

Reported by Stacie Crozier, senior editor, ADA News.

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