

Gastric Bypass Patients Should Include Tomatoes in Their Diet

After weight loss surgery it is important to include as many healthy foods in our diet as possible while still respecting the restrictive nature of the gastric bypass system. One of the foods that many patients report having a high tolerance for is tomatoes. It's well known that a high intake of tomato products is associated with a lowered risk of colon and prostate cancers, a beneficial effect thought to be due to tomatoes' high content of the carotenoids, lycopene and beta-carotene. Lycopene is a member of the carotenoid family of phytochemicals and is the natural pigment responsible for the deep red color of several fruits, most notably tomatoes. Recently scientists have found evidence that supports the role of lycopene in human health, specifically in the prevention of cancers of the prostate, pancreas, stomach, breast, cervix and lung, as well as in the prevention of cardiovascular disease, cataracts, and age-related macular degeneration. Lycopene is also believed to play a role in the prevention of heart disease by inhibiting free radical damage to LDL cholesterol. Before cholesterol can be deposited in the plaques that harden and narrow arteries, it must be oxidized by free radicals. With its powerful antioxidant activity, lycopene can prevent LDL cholesterol from being oxidized. Lycopene is a fat-soluble substance, and as such requires the presence of dietary fat for proper absorption through the digestive tract. To facilitate proper absorption, tomatoes can be prepared with minimal healthy fat such as olive oil, canola oil or even dairy fat found in cheese. These "healthy fats" are generally well tolerated by gastric bypass patients.

Shopping for Tomatoes: Choose tomatoes that have a deep rich color. Not only is this one of the signs of a delicious tasting tomato, but the deep color indicates that it has a greater supply of the health-promoting phytochemical red pigment, lycopene. Tomatoes should be well shaped and smooth skinned with no wrinkles, cracks, bruises or soft spots. They should not have a puffy appearance since this indicates that they will be of inferior flavor and will cause excess waste during preparation. Ripe tomatoes will yield to slight pressure and will have a noticeably sweet fragrance.

Tips for Preparing Tomatoes: Before serving, wash tomatoes under cool running water and pat dry. If your recipe requires seeded tomatoes, cut the fruit in half horizontally and gently squeeze out the seeds and the juice.

About the Author

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