

A new study published online has found that adults with a higher intake of flavonoids (oranges, berries, onions, celery) during midlife have a greater likelihood of healthier aging past 70 years of age.

Higher dietary bioflavonoid intake improves odds of healthy aging

In population based studies, diets higher in phytonutrients such as flavonoids have been associated with lower risk of developing several degenerative diseases such as cardiovascular disease, hypertension, stroke, cancer, diabetes and neurodegenerative diseases. Although there may be a strong biological rationale for a role of flavonoids in healthy aging, there has been limited research in this area specifically.

In a new study published online in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, researchers examined the intake of major subclasses of flavonoids at midlife with the prevalence of healthy aging. Healthy aging was defined by the researchers as surviving to older ages (70+ years), free of major chronic disease and maintaining good cognitive, physical and mental health.

The study included 13,818 women in their late 50s from the Nurses' Health Study (enrolled between 1984-1986) with no major chronic disease. The women provided information on many aspects of aging an average of 15 years later. Food frequency questionnaires were used to determine intake of six major flavonoid subclasses in midlife.

A total of 1,517 (11%) women met the criteria for healthy aging. Compared to women in the lowest 20% of intake, women with the highest 20% intake of several subclasses of flavonoids at midlife had a greater likelihood of healthy aging. Specifically, women with the highest intakes of flavones, flavanones, anthocyanins and flavanols had greater odds of healthy aging than those with the lowest intakes. In a separate analysis of each component of healthy aging, higher flavone and flavanone intakes were significantly associated with better mental health and physical function.

The results of this study indicate that a higher intake of flavonoids at midlife, specifically flavones (parsley, celery, citrus peels), flavanones (oranges, orange juice), anthocyanins (berries) and flavanols (onions, broccoli) are associated with greater odds of health and wellbeing in adults surviving to older ages.

Cécilia Samieri et al. Dietary flavonoid intake at midlife and healthy aging in women. First published October 29, 2014, doi: 10.3945/ajcn.114.085605.