

Food, health get top billing at national chemistry meeting

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Well beyond the advice to drink enough water and not eat too much NaCl, the nation's chemists will get elemental with grapefruit, onions, peppers, tomatoes, carrots and watermelons this week at the American Chemical Society meeting.

The world's largest scientific society is observing the 100 anniversary of its Agricultural and Food Chemistry Division with a series of talks aimed at new discoveries in the health benefits from phytochemicals in fruits and vegetables.

"Mom's conventional wisdom of eating fruits and vegetables to lead a healthy life has evolved into more scientific, fact-finding research during the last four decades due to advances in science," said Dr. Bhimu Patil, the division chair and director of the Texas A&M University Vegetable and Fruit Improvement Center. "Studies are showing the importance of fruits, vegetables and nuts in reducing the risk of cancer and cardiovascular diseases.

"It is befitting that (the society) is focusing more on health and preventing diseases," Patil said in a message to membership.

Patil said several recent studies indicate that adding one serving of fruits and vegetables to diet reduces the risk of cardiovascular diseases by up to 7 percent.

But, Patil said, research still is needed to determine how the chemical

makeup of fruits and vegetables interact in humans.

"While we continue to consume various healthy foods, several challenges of toxicity, bioavailability of certain bioactive compounds, and food-drug interactions are yet to be understood," he noted.

Source: Texas A&M University

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