



January 23, 2016 – Grand Rapids, MI

## Why You Need Your Seven

Green leafy vegetables and fruit convey health benefits to eyes and men's sexual function. Why? It all comes down to blood flow and specifically, how those foods help blood vessels.

Nitrates cause dilation of blood vessels, especially the minute blood vessels in the heart, the eyes, and other organs, exactly when we need it most. Most people associate nitrates with processed meats, but green leafy vegetables and root vegetables such as beets have a far greater nitrate content without dragging along a lot of fat and sodium. The nitrates provide the raw materials that help the nitric oxide system dilate blood vessels.



The phytonutrient class of flavonoids found in berries and citrus fruit also help the blood vessels. They contribute to the health of the innermost layer of blood vessel cells called endothelial cells. The simplest way to explain it is that they can help the body repair damage to the endothelial cells and prepare the cells to respond to nitrates to help with vasodilation. It's easy to see how that benefits the eyes and sex organs as well as the heart, kidneys, and just about every other organ as well.

I've been critical of these long-term studies, mostly because they rely on Food Frequency Questionnaires, but that doesn't mean they serve no purpose. These types of studies are important because they examine food intake in real human beings. While the potential for error is significant with any type of self reporting, it does let us examine people in the lifestyle they say they're living. We get a view over time at self-reported habits and health. It's not perfect but it does have value.

What does it mean to you? It's time to quit playing games and get your seven or more servings of vegetables and fruits every day. The health benefits far outweigh whether we like veggies or not. You don't have to like them. Raw or cooked, buried in casseroles or smoothies—just eat them every day.

If you want more information on the benefits of the nitric oxide system on health and performance, sign up for my annual [Super Bowl Webinar](#). I'm updating the information on my *Optimal Performance* CD, and I'll be presenting it at this annual event. If you want the latest information on how to perform better in sport and life, you can't miss this webinar on February 7 at noon Eastern Time.

What are you prepared to do today?

**Dr. Chet**

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