

Traditional wisdom from Yuzurihara – the Village of Long Life

Louise McCoy

Reading about a Japanese village where the inhabitants live into their 90s with their faculties intact, youthful skin, eyes and joints, I was intrigued.

How do they do that? The source was a mailer for a company marketing a pill with a “secret” ingredient – the one that makes it possible for these Japanese to work hours in their fields into their 90s and have joints as flexible as those of youth.

Their village, called Yuzurihara, or the Village of Long Life, is in a mountainous part of Japan about one-and-a-half hours from Tokyo. This was documented in a programme about the inhabitants on ABC news in the US with Connie Chung in 2000.

Hyaluronic acid

The “secret” ingredient is hyaluronic acid (HA), but the answer is not a simple change in diet, adding the foods eaten in Yuzurihara.

Dr Toyosuki Kimori, medical doctor and native to the village, investigated the reason for people’s longevity and found that Yuzuriharas had an abundance of HA.

This substance is found throughout connective tissue, in brains, eyes and joints, and is abundant in youth. Throughout life, there is a natural process whereby HA is broken down

and replaced. Unfortunately, as we age, the breaking down increasingly overtakes the building up process.

Yuzurihara diet

The Yuzurihara diet is a difficult one to follow, even for other Japanese. There is very little rice, as their mountainous area will not grow it. The diet consists mainly of starchy tubers – satsumaimo, a type of sweet potato; taro, a sticky white root; konnyaku, a gelatinous root vegetable; and

“ Yuzurihara villagers live into their 90s with youthful skin, eyes and joints. ”

tamaji, a small sweet potato. The diet also includes barley, vegetables, bean paste, fish and fermented soy.

The diet is very high in fibre and low in iron. There doesn’t seem to be one outstanding source of HA. Since the root vegetables are full of magnesium needed for the synthesis of HA, Dr Kimori speculated that the tubers play a major role in health and longevity.

Notable is the absence of foods

such as white rice, sugar and processed food.

According to Bill Sardi, who wrote *How To Live 100 Years Without Growing Old*, some of the villagers indulge freely in cigarettes and sake without sacrificing their health or longevity.

HA has the unique characteristic of being able to gel water. One gram of HA will gel six quarts of water. HA is the water carrier for each cell. This has major importance for the joints, which are lubricated with synovial fluid, a viscous liquid between the bones that gets squeezed from the articulating cartilage as we move.

For decades, injections of HA have been used to relieve pain in knee and other joints. Oral supplements also have healed joint problems, but if inadequate water is taken with them, blood pressure can rise.

Food sources

Food sources of HA include rooster combs, chicken joints, tendons and skin (leftovers used to make soup after you’ve eaten the meat), eyeballs (not very tempting) and fermented soy, as the phytoestrogens in soy are involved with the synthesis of HA.

Sandy Simmons found the soup relieved her fibromyalgia pains.

HA impacts every system in the body, from the skin to the brain. The enzyme that eliminates HA, hyaluronidase, which normally acts as a



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regulator, is an ageing factor. It also occurs in animal venoms and poisons.

Hyaluronidase has an important place in our physiology, not only

in the process of ageing, but also in the process of creation. The sperm needs hyaluronidase to penetrate the covering of HA around the egg.



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