

## Antioxidants

Antioxidants are naturally occurring nutrients found in some food, mainly fruit and vegetables. They are known to protect the human body from oxidation, or free radical damage, which can result in serious diseases.

Although breathing oxygen is essential to life, oxygen can also be your worst enemy. It starts a process in your body called oxidation, which is the formation of free radicals.

Oxidation of metal is a good example. Iron gets rusty, aluminium is bleached an ugly white and copper turns an “aged” green. Something similar happens when your body is exposed to air, light and poor nutrition.

As you can imagine, oxidative damage plays a huge role in our modern-day diseases, such as muscle and tissue degeneration, heart disease, diabetes, cancer as well as many other health problems.

Antioxidants block the process of oxidation by neutralizing free radicals. In doing so, the antioxidants themselves become oxidized. That is why there is a constant need to replenish our antioxidant stores.

### The Health Benefits of Antioxidants:

They protect human cells from oxidative damage and provide:

- Anti-aging of cells and overall body;
- Reduced incidence of all cancers;
- Glaucoma and macular degeneration prevention;
- Reduced risk of cholesterol-oxidation and heart disease;
- Stronger immunity and resistance to flues, viruses and infections.

### Sources:

- Vegetables – broccoli, spinach, green leafy vegetables, Brussels sprouts, beetroot, red peppers, carrots and tomatoes.
- Fruits – all berries, oranges, pink grapefruit, apricots, plums, peaches, red grapes, papaya and pomegranates.
- Cereals and whole grains, nuts and seeds.
- Red meat, poultry, fish and eggs.

The above mentioned foods are rich in beta-carotene, Vitamin C, Vitamin E, Selenium, Lutein and Lycopene, which all have antioxidant qualities.

Antioxidants are widely used as ingredients in dietary supplements, but research suggests that antioxidant supplements don't work as well as naturally occurring antioxidants in foods such as fruit and vegetables. It is important to ensure that our diets include a rich, diverse and constant supply of antioxidants.

See your doctor or dietician for more specific advice.

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