

Antioxidants

Antioxidants are naturally occurring nourishment in food that protects our tissues against attack, ageing and deterioration. They support our strong immune defence system by acting as a protective army as well as reduce inflammation and help blood flow. They are great for long lasting wellbeing.



- Antioxidants are mostly found in the skin and peel of fruits and vegetables.
- They act as 'free radical scavengers' preventing and repairing damage done by reactive oxygen caused by inflammation and infection.
- It is thought they protect our bodies as against certain cancers, ageing and illness.
- They keep our immune system guarded and strong.
- Skin with brown blotchy discoloration or "age spots" is a sign of antioxidant lack.

What are antioxidants?

Antioxidants are compounds found in foods that our body needs for wellbeing. The effect of what an antioxidant does is evident with an apple on a tree. The antioxidant rich skin is a protector to the fruit ageing, the outside environment and to bugs. If you peel off the antioxidant skin, the apple will last only a very short time, turning aged brown and being attacked by bugs until it decomposes. In your body, antioxidants are lining your skin and organs as protectors. Eating foods rich in antioxidants boosts your protective levels.

The science of oxidation - Free radical damage

You may have heard of "free radicals"? These are reactive oxygen molecules which damage our cell membranes and other structures. Our bodies are exposed to free radicals naturally through the process of metabolism, and while we can cope with some free radicals, an overload is cause for concern. Free radical overload can be caused by illness, infection, pollution, pesticides and heat exposure, as well as lifestyle factors such as smoking, stress, prolonged exercise, alcohol and a processed food diet.

Free radicals react with our cell membranes and other structures such as DNA, lipids and proteins by stealing electrons from these molecules and causing damage just like the skin of an apple when it turns brown. When a free radical attacks these surfaces they in turn change into free radicals themselves causing a chain reaction that can lead to the destruction of the tissues. In short, this is not a good thing!

Science tells us that antioxidants are able to neutralise free radicals by giving their own spare electrons to the free radicals and 'calming it down' therefore protecting the free radical from further damaging the body.

After blocking a free radical, antioxidants become inactive, which means they need to be constantly re-supplied to our bodies through the right foods.

Free radicals can cause

- Damage to nerve cells in the brain – Alzheimer's, Dementia, motor neurone disease.
- Joint and muscle aches – arthritis, fibromyalgia.
- Damage to the lenses of the eye – cataracts, vision deterioration.
- Skin ageing – age spots, wrinkles, lack lustre skin.
- Recurrent infections – immune weakness
- Increased risk of heart disease and certain cancers.

How to include antioxidants every day

Antioxidants need to be part of your everyday food plan. Eating a variety of natural foods – fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, legumes, nuts, seeds and wholegrains - is the best way to supply your body with daily nourishment. Dominate your plate with fresh foods always. Quality practitioner–strength supplements play a role in boosting your antioxidant levels during times of stress, inflammation and infection when you need them most.

Daily Antioxidant sources are found in all vegetables, salads and fruits, but here are some super sources of the main antioxidants.

- Beta-carotene orange foods such as carrots, pumpkin, apricots, sweet potatoes and some leafy greens such as kale, spinach and gourmet lettuces.
- Lutein green, leafy vegetables.
- Lycopene tomatoes, watermelon, papaya.
- Selenium whole rice and whole wheat, whole grains, brazil nuts and other nuts.
- Vitamin A carrots, sweet potato, milk, egg yolks.
- Vitamin E almonds, unheated oils eg. Salad dressings, mangoes, nuts, broccoli.
- Vitamin C many fruits and vegetables such as parsley, broccoli, berries, oranges, mandarins, berries, cauliflower, kale, spinach etc.
- Bioflavanoids berries, cherries, grapes, tea

Take home tip

For massive antioxidant boosts, shop the online store at www.yourstepstowellness.com/shop-online. In the organic pantry, see supergreens and reds section great products.

- ✓ Eat fresh food with antioxidants everyday as part of the two-thirds of your plate which contains food that you would find straight from the garden – vegetables, salads and fruits.
- ✓ Make fresh fruit smoothies, stir fry leafy greens, make super salads.
- ✓ Supplement when the demand for these increases to protect your body – your naturopath will guide you on the best antioxidant for your body.



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