

7052 - Have you had your antioxidants today?



What are Antioxidants?

Antioxidants are present in foods which contain vitamins, minerals, carotenoids, and polyphenols. Many antioxidants are often identified in food by their distinctive colors—the deep red of tomatoes; the orange of carrots; the yellow of mangos; and the blue/purple of blueberries and grapes. Vitamin C, Vitamin E and selenium are antioxidants that play a role in health maintenance and possibly, disease prevention. Carotenoids are other compounds that may also have antioxidant benefits and include beta-carotene, lutein and lycopene. Scientists are studying how these antioxidants may prevent heart disease, cancer, cataracts and other conditions that occur as we age.

How they work

Oxidation, or the loss of an electron, can sometimes produce reactive substances in the body known as free radicals that can cause oxidative stress or damage to the cells. Antioxidants, by their very nature, are capable of stabilizing free radicals before they can react and cause harm. Because oxidation is a naturally occurring process within the body, a balance with antioxidants must exist to maintain health.

Here are some suggestions on how to increase the antioxidants in your diet

- ✓ Aim to reach 5-10 servings of vegetables and fruit everyday. These foods are rich in vitamin C and beta-carotene. If you smoke, be sure to grab an extra serving or two since you need more vitamin C than non-smokers.
- ✓ Choose the most colourful veggies, fruits and juices when deciding on which ones to consume. Dark green, red and orange vegetables pack in the most amounts of beta-carotene, lutein or lycopene.
- ✓ Vitamin C is lost during storage time and when it is cooked in water, so try to eat fruits and vegetables when they are fresh and raw, as much as possible.
- ✓ Olive oil is an excellent source of Vitamin E! Try adding a small amount of this oil when cooking or preparing foods. Sunflower, canola, and safflower oils are great choices.

Excellent Sources of Antioxidants!



Vitamin C: citrus fruits and juices, apple juice, kiwi fruit, strawberries, broccoli, brussel sprouts, peppers, potatoes, tomatoes	Vitamin E: vegetable oils, wheat germ, nuts, seeds, peanut butter, papayas, avocados, sweet potatoes	Selenium: brazil nuts, grain products, wheat germ, wheat bran, oat bran, fish, shellfish, meat, poultry, eggs, beans	Carotenoids: carrots, cantaloupe, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, broccoli, pink grapefruit, tomatoes, dark green leafy veggies
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Tea and Antioxidants

Some recent studies are suggesting that green, black and oolong teas contain antioxidants called polyphenols and catechins. Drinking tea may also protect against cancer, heart disease and stroke so try substituting tea for coffee for a healthier choice!

