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How Do Antioxidants Benefit Me?



Antioxidants offer a number of health benefits, and they have been touted as a possible preventative of diseases, ranging from cancer to Alzheimer's. Research suggests that antioxidants can indeed be effective in preventing a number of age-related diseases.

What Antioxidants Are and Where You Can Find Them

Antioxidants are present in fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as whole grains. Fruits and veggies that have bright, distinctive colors, such as red tomatoes, purple blueberries, yellow corn and orange carrots, are rich in antioxidants.

A number of the vitamins, minerals and compounds in food have antioxidant properties. Vitamins A, C and E are among the most well known, as are beta-carotene, lycopene and selenium. Some foods that contain large amounts of antioxidants include:

- Carrots
- Green leafy vegetables like kale, collards and spinach
- Berries, cherries and grapes
- Green tea
- Citrus fruits
- Apples and pears

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JUICE BAR

How Antioxidants Fight Oxidative Stress and Radicals

Antioxidants: The Key to a Healthy Diet

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How Antioxidants Fight Oxidative Stress and Free Radicals

As you age, your body tissues suffer from oxidative stress due to the process of oxidation. Oxidation occurs when molecules within your body lose electrons to electrically-charged molecules of oxygen in your blood stream. These electrically charged oxygen molecules are called "free radicals," and they have the potential to cause damage to cellular DNA. Over time, the damage can become irreversible and lead to disease.

Oxidation is a natural process that happens to everyone. Because it's natural, a diet rich in antioxidants is necessary to keep the levels of free radicals in your body low and maintain good health. The more free radicals build up in your body, the more oxidative stress you'll suffer.

As you age, your body's natural defenses against oxidation, free radicals and oxidative stress become less effective. That's why researchers believe that a high level of dietary antioxidants can prevent many age-related diseases.

Certain behaviors can increase the numbers of free radicals within our bodies. Smoking, drinking and sunbathing can cause unsafe increases in free radical production within the body. Other factors that can increase free radical production include air pollution, infection, and exposure to toxic substances or radiation.

Health Benefits of Antioxidants

Antioxidants benefit your health by cleaning free radicals out of your bloodstream. They have a range of health benefits; some studies have shown that antioxidants reduce the signs of aging by minimizing wrinkles and preserving the texture of the skin. They can even protect your skin from sun damage, and reduce the incidence of sunburn.

Although antioxidants aren't proven to treat any conditions, research has shown that antioxidants have also been implicated in the prevention of a number of degenerative, age-related disease, including:

- Cancer
- Cardiovascular disease
- Cognitive impairment
- Immune dysfunction
- Cataracts
- Macular degeneration
- Alzheimer's

Different antioxidants benefit different parts of the body. For instance, the beta carotene found in carrots can help maintain eye health. The lycopene found in tomatoes can contribute to prostate health. The flavonoids found in tea, cocoa and chocolate are good for your heart, while the proanthocyanidins found in cranberries and apples can aid in the maintenance of the urinary tract.

In order to ensure that you get plenty of antioxidants in your daily diet, the USDA recommends that you eat a varied diet, with at least five servings of fruits and vegetables per day, and six to eleven servings of grains, including at least three servings of whole grains.

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