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Antioxidants: What They Do and Why You Need Them

Antioxidants: The Body's Personal Defense System

Our bodies are full of cells that function independently, but they must work together cohesively to keep us healthy. When our bodies are exposed to certain chemicals, smoking, pollution, radiation, or even normal metabolic activities, the process of oxidation occurs. This can lead to unstable molecules called "free radicals," which wreak havoc on the body when they aren't kept in check.

Oxidative stress results when free radicals accumulate, and it is ultimately linked to an increased risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and cancer.¹ Luckily, the body produces some natural antioxidants to keep free radicals under control. Eating food that is rich in antioxidants will help your body fight off these harmful molecules.

Getting Enough Antioxidants

To help ward off potential damage from free radicals, you can incorporate antioxidant-rich foods into your day-to-day diet. Some research suggests that antioxidants are more effective when they are obtained from food, rather than through supplemental tablets.² Here are a few supermarket staples that can support your antioxidant levels:

- **Pecans:** In addition to having a high amount of antioxidants, pecans are also a great source of healthy fats and minerals, making them an excellent choice for a midday snack. However, pecans are high in calories, so be intentional about eating them sparingly to avoid overdoing your calorie intake.
- **Dried Fruit:** Because dried fruit has had all of its water removed, you get more antioxidants in each serving than you would from fresh fruit. Similar to pecans, dried fruit makes a convenient snack during the day, especially when mixed with other nutrient-rich ingredients in a trail mix. When you're buying dried fruit at your local supermarket, be sure to note the processed sugar content. Try to purchase natural products without added sugar.
- **Blueberries:** Blueberries are low in calories, but they are packed with antioxidants. In fact, some research has determined that blueberries have the highest amount of antioxidants among all of the commonly consumed fruits and vegetables.³ They have even been shown to reduce the risk of high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

- **Spices & Herbs:** Turmeric, cumin, rosemary, parsley, oregano, and basil have high levels of various antioxidant compounds, which means the more that you use in your cooking and baking, the more antioxidants your body will have available to utilize.
- **Juice, Tea, & Coffee:** Antioxidants can come from our beverages just as easily as they do from food. Tomato juice, pomegranate juice, and grapefruit juice are excellent options. Additionally, coffee and tea have high levels of antioxidants. Because of their caffeine levels, they should always be consumed in moderation.

Are you looking to add more antioxidants to your diet? Don't be afraid to try new options to support your wellness. Try to diversify your foods to get a wide range of nutrients. Foods with darker, richer colors are usually higher in antioxidants.

Strike a Balance

Despite the damage free radicals can do when they're left unchecked, they do serve a purpose for the human body. For example, they're used to combat infections and illnesses. That's why it's important to avoid large doses of antioxidants. When you create an imbalance in your body, you could be doing more harm than good. Moderation is the key.

To promote a healthy ratio of free radicals to antioxidants, most wellness professionals recommend limiting antioxidant intake to the natural amounts found in fruits and vegetables. By carefully curating a balanced diet, you can consume a broader range of nutrients, rather than becoming too narrowly focused on specific supplements.

Conclusion

At Trinity School of Natural Health, we believe a deep understanding of the body and its needs can serve as a starting point for achieving maximum wellness. Proper nutrition plays a significant role in almost every bodily process, and you must be aware of the nutrients and supplements that make positive emotional, mental, and physical impacts.

If you want to expand your knowledge in nutrition so that you can equip others to support their health, consider becoming a Certified Nutritional Consultant. Our Certified Nutritional Consultant program will help you understand the latest food-related trends and prepare you to offer recommendations that will benefit your clients no matter where they are in their wellness journey. Are you ready to get started? [Contact an enrollment specialist today.](#)

REFERENCES

1. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23675073/>
2. <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/antioxidants>
3. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/10995120/>



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