

Antioxidants in Fruit

Not all fruits are created equal. Some fruits have more antioxidant content than others. While one fruit may have nutrients with antioxidant properties, others may only have vitamins. But whatever the case, it is clear that the antioxidants in fruit are good for your health.

The human body derives its energy from oxygen. But oxygen, for all its benefits, may also carry with it some negative effects. When processing oxygen in the body (a process called "oxidation"), oxygen byproducts are produced. These byproducts, called free radicals, are highly reactive substances that can cause damage to cells. The antioxidant substances found in certain fruits may work to neutralize these free radicals and prevent them from causing damage.

Many people are already familiar with which fruits are high in antioxidants. Citrus fruits are known for their high vitamin C content. Apples are known for their beta-carotene. Consuming lots of fruit rich in antioxidants helps boost the body's defense against free radicals and oxidative stress (damage caused by free radicals). Oxidative stress is a process which scientists have linked with the development of chronic and degenerative diseases, such as heart disease and cancer.

Fruit, vegetables, and grains in your diet are more beneficial to your health than taking antioxidant supplements. Scientists suggest that consuming antioxidants in food may provide a combination of lesser-known but more potent antioxidants. This might afford greater effect than any single nutritional supplement.

In a recent issue of the Journal of Nutrition, the antioxidant content of several fruits, berries, vegetables, cereals, nuts, and legumes, were analyzed.

According to their findings, the best sources of antioxidants among berries were the dog rose, sour cherry, blackberry, strawberry, raspberry, crowberry, blueberry, and black currant. Among fruit were pomegranate, grapes, oranges, plums, pineapple, lemons, dates, kiwi, clementines, and grapefruit. For legumes, broad beans topped the list. In the nut category, walnuts and sunflower seeds occupied the first and second spots, respectively. Other foods with antioxidant properties include kale, chili peppers, red cabbage, barley, millet, corn, ginger, and red beets.