

DR. CHRISTOPHER'S
Herbal Legacy Newsletter

What are antioxidants, free radicals and flavonoids

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Let's start with the term "oxidation." Oxygen is required by your body to simply stay alive - it keeps your cells healthy and keeps the millions of processes in your body functioning properly. However, oxygen can also cause problems. Oxidation is the combination of oxygen with any substance. Oxidation causes rust on cars or other metal objects, causes copper to turn green, causes fruit to mold, and apples to turn brown after you cut them. Oxidation of your cells means that your cells are being damaged, just like any other surface that reacts with oxygen.

The worst oxidation doesn't happen from the air we breathe, but from "free radical oxygen" that is found in fried food. Other significant sources include pollution, exercising strenuously (don't ever combine the last two by jogging behind a bus), and improper exposure to the sun.

Without getting too technical - free radicals in our bodies start a chain reaction that damages healthy cells. This process causes us to age prematurely and has links to cancer, heart disease, arthritis and other chronic health problems.

"Anti" is defined as against, in opposition to, or corrective in nature. For example, someone who is "anti-war" is opposed to a war. An "antioxidant" helps correct oxidation of the cells by binding with the harmful free radical molecules and terminating the chain reactions, flushing other free radicals out of your body, repairing damage already done, and stopping other oxidation reactions by being oxidized themselves.

Our body naturally creates some antioxidants that battle the oxidation, but it doesn't produce enough to take care of the problem by itself. However, the Creator gave us foods to help us get the additional antioxidants needed.

You can help your body be as healthy as possible by taking some simple steps. First - stop eating fried foods and foods with trans-fats in them. Second - don't exercise in polluted areas (but DO exercise). Third - expose your body to the sun properly (more on that in a minute); and Fourth - eat power foods that are packed with antioxidants.

In regards to sun exposure - it is true that laying out in the sun and getting a sunburn is cancer causing. You need to expose your body to the sun properly. There is an entire article in our database that teaches you how to do that - you can read it at <http://articles.herballegacy.com/sun-exposure-how-much-is-too-much/>. In addition to increasing your exposure to the sun gradually, you need to be sure you are eating foods high in flavonoids. Flavonoids are nature's sunscreen and will protect you from the damaging effects of the sun. You should eat foods high in flavonoids daily.

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What foods can you eat that are high in antioxidants and flavonoids? Here are some of your best sources:

- * Berries
- * Beans - kidney beans, black beans - all types of beans. You can find some great bean recipes in our recipe database
- * Foods with Vitamins C and E are especially potent - Citrus is a great example - especially the white part of the citrus
- * Dark green leafy vegetables or vegetables with strong colors - like dark red bell peppers and eggplant
- * Nuts and seeds

The USDA tested over 100 foods from all categories and developed a list of the top 20 antioxidant rich foods. Here is their list:

- small red beans
- wild blueberries
- red kidney beans
- pinto beans
- cultivated blueberries
- cranberries
- artichokes
- blackberries
- prunes
- raspberries
- strawberries
- red delicious apples
- Granny Smith apples
- Pecans
- sweet cherries
- black plums
- russet potatoes
- black beans
- plums
- gala apples

NOTE: In general, these foods need to be eaten fresh and/or raw (with the exception of beans or lightly steaming things like artichokes). Cooking or processing them removes the helpful

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compounds. For example - in order to concentrate orange juice the juice is cooked until it becomes a syrup. This process destroys the Vitamin C and other healthy compounds, making it, at best, a worthless food. Also - supplements that have antioxidants are not as good as the food itself (the whole is better than the part).

The bottom line is this - you are going to be exposed to harmful substances. Eating a diet that is composed mostly of fresh vegetables and fruits that include a variety of the items listed above can be a powerful shield against the damaging effects of free radicals.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

<http://www.ahyradio.com/Antioxidants.html>

<http://www.wisegeek.com/what-are-antioxidants.htm>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antioxidants>

<http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-oxidation.htm>

http://vitamins-minerals.suite101.com/article.cfm/top_20_foods_high_in_antioxidants