

ANTIOXIDANTS AND HEALTH

Over the last few years antioxidants and the effects of diet in general on health have gotten more and more media attention. So what is the buzz about? What are antioxidants anyway? Antioxidants are a group of compounds that are produced by the body and that occur naturally in many foods. Antioxidants work together in the body to maintain our health and vigor well into the late decades of life. They do this by protecting us from damage caused by free radicals, which can injure healthy cells and tissues. The body produces free radicals in the normal course of energy production, but there are also substances in our surrounding environment-certain chemicals, smoke, pollutants, solar radiation-that trigger the production of free radicals. Scientists now believe that free radicals are causal factors in nearly every known disease, from heart disease to arthritis to cancer to cataracts. In fact, free radicals are a major culprit in the aging process itself.

By controlling free radicals, antioxidants can influence how fast and how well we age. There is overwhelming evidence that those of us who eat a diet rich in antioxidants and take antioxidant supplements will live longer, healthier lives.

How can we know if our antioxidant level is high enough? Like cholesterol, you can't tell by how you feel whether your antioxidant level is high or low. However, now there are two ways to measure antioxidant levels. The first is a blood test which will tell you specifically which antioxidants are high or low. The second gives a general antioxidant number using the Biophotonic Scanner developed by the University of Utah.

What can we do to raise our antioxidant level? Eat more fruits and vegetables and take a high quality multivitamin.

Live well on purpose.