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The important role of anti-oxidants in the Human Body

The critical role played by anti-oxidants in keeping us healthy and fit is well researched by scientists from several countries. However, studies continue in this area and the list of benefits that arise from consuming anti-oxidant rich foods seems to be infinite. Nutrition experts recommend that adequate intake of foods that contain these substances leads to several health benefits including improved immunity and a lowered risk of cardiac ailments. Evidently knowing more about them is in the best interest of our health.

What are Anti-oxidants?

To put it simply anti-oxidants are those substances that counteract the effects of oxidation inside our body. Both enzymes and nutrients may fall under the category of anti-oxidants. For example, vitamins and minerals are nutrients which have anti-oxidant properties while proteins are the enzymes which help fight off the effects of oxidation.

Different anti-oxidants may also have many other benefits to offer alongside their ability to counter oxidation. For example, Vitamin C (also found in Camu Camu Powder, Ormus Supergreens) has been found to help in cancer prevention. This vitamin also protects white blood cells and LDL from oxidation. Beta Carotene (found in Goji Berries, Spirulina, AFA Algae) reverses the aging process, supports cell repair and regeneration and it also helps in curbing the effects of oxidation.

Why Are Anti-oxidants Important for Good Health?

As we already saw earlier, anti-oxidants protect us from the oxidative damage that occurs as a continuous process within the human body. While the human body does have its own defenses these may not be enough to combat free radicals, which are harmful molecules arising from the oxidation process.

Within our body, oxidation takes place even when we are doing nothing more strenuous than simply breathing. The molecules produced by this internal oxidation are the endogenous free radicals. In addition, we also accumulate free radicals as a result of various external factors. Pollution, sunlight, x-rays, alcohol, smoking, even excessive exercise can result in the production of free radicals categorized as exogenous ones.

These free radicals can impair the structure of the human cells and damage them beyond repair. There is also scientific evidence to show that free radicals hasten the aging process and set the stage for several life threatening diseases such as cancer.

In a perfectly healthy person, the body's in-built defense mechanism can take care of neutralizing free radicals so that they do not cause any harm. However, any illness that weakens the body also weakens the immune system that does this job, which means that free radicals may 'go scot free' when your body's immune system is not at peak performance.

As we age, our defense system begins to show signs of wear and tear and its efficiency in dealing with these harmful molecules dramatically reduces. In such a situation, it becomes important for us to take foods that are rich in anti-oxidants so that the ability of our body to fight off free radicals is enhanced to the required levels.

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How Do Anti-oxidants Work?

There is a reason why anti-oxidants are so effective in dealing with free radicals - they impair the oxidation process. The anti-oxidants neutralize free radicals rendering them harmless. In the process they get oxidized themselves which means that we need to replenish our body's 'store' of anti-oxidants in readiness for the free radicals that will be produced in future.

There are two ways in which the anti-oxidants may work. Chain breaking anti-oxidants are those that stabilize a radical and prevent it from continuing the process of generating unstable products. Beta Carotene and Vitamin C are examples of chain breaking anti-oxidants. Preventive anti-oxidants are enzymes that cut down the number of oxidation chains that get started in our body.

According to Molly Morgan, author The Skinny Rules, one of the primary roles of anti-oxidants in the human body is to block free radicals, which adversely affect cells. In addition they also improve immunity and curb the risk of contracting common infections and more serious ailments such as certain types of cancer.

In short anti-oxidants have the following benefits to offer:

- Improve immunity
- Lower the risk of many life threatening ailments
- Slow down and reverse the aging process
- Reduce the risk of falling ill owing to physical strain/ excessive exercising

Which Are the Main Anti-oxidants?

Fortunately for us, there are a number of foods that contain antioxidants. These include fruits, vegetables, grains and nuts. Some kinds of meat, poultry and fish are also rich in this substance. Surprisingly, tea and red wine also have anti-oxidant properties. Knowing which substances have anti-oxidant properties helps us include them in our diet.

- Anti-oxidant 1: Vitamin C - Get your daily dose of this essential anti-oxidant from regular intake of citrus fruits, broccoli, cabbages, potatoes and green leafy veggies. Find it in Camu Camu Powder, Supergreens. Or buy Vitamin C Powder.
- Anti-oxidant 2: Vitamin E - This vitamin is found in wheat germ, seeds, whole grains, nuts and green leafy vegetables. Find it in Hemp Nuts, Bee Pollen.
- Anti-oxidant 3: Beta Carotene - Carrots, broccoli, squash, collard greens, peaches, kale and apricots contain beta carotene. Find it in Goji Berries, Spirulina, AFA Algae).
- Anti-oxidant 4: Selenium- An essential trace mineral, selenium is found in Goji Berries, Bee Pollen, AFA Algae.

If you have seen the damage that rust can do to a car (through the oxidation process), you will understand exactly how much damage oxidation can wreak in your body. Ensure that you protect yourself both from endogenous and exogenous free radicals by taking adequate quantities of anti-oxidant rich foods.

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