

## **What are antioxidants and why are they so good for you?**

By Rachel O'Regan | January 7, 2016

So, we've all heard of antioxidants by now... right? The word is emblazoned on pretty much every superfood you'd find at the health shop.

But here's the thing – aside from a nutritional buzzword, do people really know... what are antioxidants? And what do they do? We thought not, so here's a simple breakdown of just what antioxidants really are.

In a nutshell, antioxidants prevent cell damage.

Antioxidants "mop up" and neutralize free radicals, which cause damage to DNA and cells. While free radical damage (oxidation) is inevitable and a normal part of aging, studies have shown that antioxidants may help prevent or manage chronic disease, soothe inflammation and even help stave off cancer.

### **What are the types of antioxidants?**

We'd be here all day if we went through all the antioxidants that exist. But here are five that show up commonly in our favorite foods.

Vitamin C. Also known as ascorbic acid, vitamin C is needed for good immune function. But don't go reaching for the orange juice – rich sources of vitamin C include yellow capsicum, kale, broccoli, parsley and kiwi fruit.

Vitamin E. Want glowing skin? Vitamin E has been traditionally used for a #flawless complexion, so munch on nuts, seeds and avocado to get your daily dose.

Selenium. This is the only mineral that is classified as a known antioxidant (plus it's amazingly good for your thyroid and immune system). And just two Brazil nuts a day is enough to reach your selenium quota.

Beta-carotene. This antioxidant is the stuff that gives carrots, pumpkins and sweet potatoes their bright color. Beta-carotene has been shown to defend against mutations that might cause cancer... but don't eat too much, or you could end up with orange skin.

Lycopene. Emerging science suggests this potent antioxidant may help prevent coronary heart disease. It's also a bright red pigment, so check out tomatoes, red capsicum and purple cabbage.

Pretty much all foods have antioxidants, not just superfoods.

It's pretty easy to get sucked into claims that such-and-such exotic food has the most antioxidants in the world. Pretty much every food you eat has antioxidants, especially fruit and veggies.

Want to know how you can boost your intake with normal food?

Eat a ton of vegetables.

Eat brightly colored ones, at that.

Stay away from sugary, processed junk. There's nothing good in that!