According to the Harvard School of Public Health’s website, antioxidants work to defend our bodies by “giving electrons to free radicals without turning into electron-scavenging substances themselves. They are also involved in mechanisms that repair DNA and maintain the health of cells.” Too many free radicals in the body causes oxidative stress which can damage cells and lead to chronic disease such as atherosclerosis and has been linked to cancer, vision loss, and other chronic conditions.

Antioxidants are best sourced from whole foods as some studies show there is no health benefit from supplements as “antioxidants tend to work best in combination with other nutrients, plant chemicals, and even other antioxidants.”

“Epidemiological prospective studies show that higher intakes of antioxidant-rich fruits, vegetables, and legumes are associated with a lower risk of chronic oxidative stress-related diseases like cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and deaths from all causes. [30-33] A plant-based diet is believed to protect against chronic oxidative stress-related diseases. [2] It is not clear if this protective effect is due to the antioxidants, other substances in the foods, or a combination of both.”

“Bottom line on antioxidants and disease prevention

Excessive free radicals contribute to chronic diseases including cancer, heart disease, cognitive decline, and vision loss. This doesn’t automatically mean that substances with antioxidant properties will fix the problem, especially if they are taken out of their natural context. The studies so far are inconclusive but generally don’t provide strong evidence that antioxidant supplements have a substantial impact on disease. Keep in mind that most of the trials conducted have had fundamental limitations due to their relatively short duration and inclusion of people with existing disease. At the same time, abundant evidence suggests that eating whole in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains—all rich in networks of naturally occurring antioxidants and their helper molecules—provides protection against many scourges of aging.”

<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/antioxidants/>

The Nutrition Journal compiled the total antioxidant content of more than 3100 foods, beverages, spices, herbs and supplements used worldwide. This is the data source for our inquiries. We will be using descriptive ananlytics to uncover some of the healthiest foods in this database.