

Antioxidant-rich Diet and Heart

Human body is like Kurukshetra. There is battle raging inside our body every-day. Free radicals which are products of cellular metabolism, damage healthy cells, seeking to destroy them and opening the door to a host of diseases. The best defense against damage caused by free radicals is a diet rich in antioxidants.

FREE RADICALS A free radical (which is a Rascal) is an atom with an unpaired electron that is formed when oxygen binds with another molecule. Since lone electron is unstable, it will attach onto another cell and kidnap an electron, destroying the cell in the process. Antioxidants fight, and destroy free radicals. Early in life, our body makes enough antioxidants to keep the process in check.

After age 40, production of antioxidants in our body diminishes. If you don't ingest more antioxidants through your diet, free radicals will build up, causing oxidative stress. Oxidative stress damages the lining of the arteries, causing inflammation and promote plaque buildup. It also reduces the distendibility of the blood vessels which make them stiff.

This would impair circulation and increase workload on the heart. In general, oxidative stress causes systemic inflammation. This is what causes many diseases like coronary disease, diabetes, high blood pressure and Alzheimer's disease. A diet high in saturated fat and sugar contributes to oxidative stress.

Environmental factors like smoking, air pollution, pesticides, heavy alcohol intake and bacterial, viral, and fungal infection will also do the same. It is true that we don't have control over everyone of them, but we have control over antioxidants we consume.

MAIN ANTIOXIDANTS FOODS:

VITAMIN C -Citrus fruits like orange and Grape fruit -Kiwi, Strawberry and Papaya - Bell peppers, Broccoli and Brussels sprouts VITAMIN E -Nuts and seeds -Vegetable oils -Avacados,Spinach CAROTENOIDS(beta-carotene,lutein, lycopene etc) -Orange and yellow vegetables like carrots, pumpkins,sweet Potato -Green leafy vegetables like Spinach, Kale -Tomatoes, Red peppers and Watermelon POLYPHENOLS AND FLAVONOIDS -Berries-Blueberries, raspberries,blackberries, Grapes,cherries,plums ,apples Dark chocolate,Green tea, Coffee Herbs and Spices- Turmeric, Oragano, Cinnamon SELENIUM AND ZINC(MINERAL ANTIOXIDANTS - Brazil Nuts(Rich inselenium) - Seafoods, Poultry, Beans, Lentils - Whole grain In general, fruits of different colors, provide different antioxidants, so nutritionists recommend eating RAINBOW.

The larger the variety of antioxidant rich foods we consume, the greater the chance that our body can fend of the damage caused by free radicals. Surprisingly, no antioxidant vitamin supplements, including vitamin C, and vitamin E, lower heart disease risk. Risk In fact,surprisingly some of these vitamin supplements taken excessively may even cause harm.

Therefore it is best to get antioxidants from fresh fruits in our diet. Mediterranean diet is a great way to get the variety of antioxidants needed.

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