

# Antioxidants

## What Do Antioxidants Do?

Antioxidants are nutrients in food that protect your cells from damage from free radicals.

- Free radicals are unstable molecules that can damage your cells. Your body creates them when you digest food or breathe in pollution.
- This cell damage may increase your risk of cancer, heart disease, cataracts, diabetes, or infections. Free radicals may also affect brain function.

## Tips for Getting More Antioxidants

- Eat a rainbow of fruits and vegetables. The colors of fruits and vegetables are clues about the types of nutrients they provide. To get a variety of nutrients, eat a variety of colors.
- Be adventurous in the produce section:
  - Choose a colorful fruit or vegetable you have never tried before.
  - Encourage your family to pick a new fruit or vegetable each time you shop.
- Plan at least two dinners per week with beans as the main source of protein. Good choices are rice and beans or hearty bean soups.
- Experiment with fresh herbs and spices.
- Choose whole grain products, such as whole wheat bread and brown rice.
- Add nuts to salads, soups, and cereal.
- Snack on fresh vegetables with bean dip.
- Eat salsa as a snack, with your scrambled eggs, on a baked potato, or with vegetables.

## Types of Antioxidants

Many nutrients are antioxidants.

Examples include:

- Vitamin A
- Vitamin C
- Vitamin E
- Anthocyanins
- Beta carotene
- Catechins
- Ellagic acid
- Lutein
- Lycopene
- Resveratrol
- Selenium

Foods probably contain other antioxidants that are still undiscovered. Eating a wide variety of foods will help you get the full benefit of these antioxidants.



## Which Foods Have Antioxidants?

Food	Antioxidant Nutrients
Acorn squash, pumpkin, winter squash	Beta carotene
Apples	Catechins
Apricots, cantaloupe, peaches	Beta carotene
Beans	Catechins, vitamin E
Beets	Anthocyanins
Bell peppers	Beta carotene, vitamin C
Berries	Anthocyanins, catechins, ellagic acid (in raspberries and strawberries), resveratrol (in blueberries), vitamin C
Broccoli, greens, spinach	Beta carotene, lutein, vitamin C
Brown rice	Selenium
Carrots	Beta carotene
Chicken	Selenium
Citrus fruits	Vitamin C
Corn	Lutein
Egg	Lutein (in yolks); selenium, vitamin A
Eggplant	Anthocyanins
Garlic and onions	Selenium
Grapefruit, pink	Lycopene, vitamin C
Grapes, red wine	Anthocyanins (in red and purple grapes), resveratrol
Mango and papaya	Beta carotene, vitamin C
Milk	Vitamin A
Nuts, nut butters, oils, seeds	Vitamin E
Oatmeal	Selenium
Peanuts	Resveratrol
Prunes	Anthocyanins
Salmon, tuna, seafood	Selenium
Sweet potatoes	Beta carotene, vitamin C
Tea, black or green	Catechins
Tomatoes (canned)	Lycopene, vitamin C
Watermelon	Lycopene, vitamin C
Wheat germ, whole grains	Selenium, vitamin E