

# EAT FOODS RICH IN ANTIOXIDANTS



**YOUR CHALLENGE:** Eat foods rich in antioxidants. Report the completion of your goal at [www.dmba.com](http://www.dmba.com) with a simple “yes” or “no.”

## WHAT ARE ANTIOXIDANTS?

You might have heard about antioxidants, but do you know what they are? Antioxidants are positively charged molecules that neutralize free radicals.

Ultimately, antioxidants appear to protect the body against diseases such as cancer, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, Parkinson’s disease, and cataracts. Antioxidants may also help keep your immune system healthy, your brain sharp, and your skin healthier.

Here’s how the process works: As part of your normal day, you eat, breathe, and drink water. You might even take prescription medicines. As your body metabolizes these substances, it naturally creates some free radicals.



A free radical is a mutated (and unstable) oxygen molecule—a molecule that is missing at least one electron. Once formed, these highly reactive molecules travel throughout your body seeking stabilization by stealing electrons from healthy cells. When they are successful in their electron-stealing attempt, the free radicals leave behind damaged cells.

Fortunately, your cells have a built-in repair system. But the repair process can't keep up when your body is subjected to a constant barrage because of excessive free radicals generated from:

- Environmental factors such as pollution, naturally occurring radiation, cigarette smoke, pesticides, and herbicides
- Your own immune system in an attempt to neutralize viruses and bacteria
- Dietary factors, such as fried foods or excess sugar

Antioxidants block this damaging process by donating an electron to the free radical before it can oxidize other cell components. Since the free radical is stabilized, it becomes non-toxic to cells.

## WHERE TO FIND ANTIOXIDANTS

You can get all the antioxidants your body needs by eating lots of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, and other healthy fats and legumes.

**Berries, apples, and other fruits** might just keep the doctor away. In terms of antioxidant content per typical serving, berries top the list—comprising six of the top 12 high-antioxidant foods. Blueberries, cranberries, blackberries, raspberries, and strawberries ranked highest. Other fruits high in antioxidants include apples, cherries, prunes, and plums.

**Legumes are linked to longevity** and include beans, peas, and lentils. In a USDA study, three of the top four antioxidant foods were beans!

A study sponsored by the International Union of Nutritional Sciences and the World Health Organization (called Food Habits in Later Life) found that for every daily increase of 20 grams of legumes (less than two tablespoons) there was an 8 percent decrease in death risk. This was true regardless of smoking status, alcohol consumption, total calories eaten, and saturated fat intake.

## GRAPE JUICE GETS A “THUMBS UP”

Purple grape juice contains flavonoids and other antioxidants, has the most staying power, and packs a real antioxidant punch.

## EAT A VARIETY OF FOODS

Researchers and leading health organizations recommend you eat a variety of nutrient-rich foods from all the basic food groups every day. One reliable way to identify antioxidant-rich foods is by their distinctive colors: the deep red of cherries and tomatoes; the orange of carrots; the yellow of corn, mangoes, and saffron; and the blue of blueberries, blackberries, and grapes. The list below describes food sources of common antioxidants.



**EAT FOODS  
RICH IN  
ANTIOXIDANTS**

## EAT FOODS RICH IN ANTIOXIDANTS



## ENHANCE FLAVOR WITH HERBS

Besides making food tastier, herbs and spices can be an abundant source of antioxidants and could provide potential anti-cancer benefits when part of a balanced diet. On an ounce-for-ounce basis, herbs and spices have the highest antioxidant activity of all the foods. But, of course, they are eaten in relatively small quantities.

These fresh herbs contain the same antioxidant activity as an apple:

- 1 tablespoon of oregano
- 3 tablespoons of dill
- 4½ tablespoons of thyme
- 7 tablespoons of sage
- 8 tablespoons of parsley

Fresher is better because fresh herbs contain more antioxidants than powdered versions.

## CHOCOLATE!

Satisfy your chocolate craving with dark cocoa. Cocoa phenolic phytochemicals, or flavonoids. But before you rush to the store for your favorite chocolate bar, consider this: while high in antioxidants, a milk chocolate bar also contains eight grams of fat.

So when you have a craving, choose dark chocolate (with cocoa content of 70 percent or higher).

## WANT MORE INFORMATION?

- American Heart Association <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living>
- WebMD <https://www.webmd.com/living-healthy>
- CDC Healthy Living <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyliving/index.html>

*Note: If you can't complete this challenge because of a medical condition, let us know and we'll come up with an alternative for you.*



**EAT FOODS  
RICH IN  
ANTIOXIDANTS**