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# antioxidant WHAT?

Maybe you've heard that antioxidants are good for you, but do you know why? What exactly is an antioxidant? Think rich-colored berries, dark leafy vegetables, and bright orange foods that don't come with labels. These are some of your best sources of antioxidants. But why do you need them?

Antioxidants can protect your cells against the effects of free radicals. Free radicals are unstable molecules produced when your body metabolizes food, and they can be increased by smoking, alcohol, exposure to heavy metals, and radiation. If left unchecked, free radicals may cause heart damage, cancer, cataracts, and a weak immune system. Free radicals may be

involved with aging of tissue and, coupled with sun damage, could promote skin cancers. Antioxidants counteract this process by binding to the free radicals, transforming them into nondamaging compounds, or repairing cellular damage. So it only makes sense to include antioxidants in your daily routine.

You can easily find antioxidants in foods and drinks. Just remember to look for deep, rich colors in natural foods, and find the phrase "contains antioxidants" featured on drink labels. When looking for topical antioxidants, find good, prescription-strength products from a trusted doctor. Over-the-counter products simply won't be strong enough to provide results. 🌿

*Listed here are some of the common antioxidants you can either eat, drink, or apply directly to your skin using creams or ointments.*

## VITAMIN A

- Foods rich in vitamin A include liver, sweet potatoes, carrots, milk, egg yolks, and mozzarella cheese.
- Can be applied to the skin as a retinol, which encourages cell turnover and tightens pores.

## VITAMIN C

- Vitamin C, or ascorbic acid, is plentiful in many fruits such as oranges and strawberries, and vegetables such as brussels sprouts and squash. It is also found in cereals, beef, poultry, and fish.

- Improves wound healing and may enhance the immune system.
- A lack of vitamin C causes scurvy, which produces fragile skin and bleeding gums.
- Topically, it reduces sun damage and fine wrinkles, and may lighten dark skin pigmentation.

## VITAMIN E

- Found in fresh fruits and vegetables such as mangos and broccoli, in safflower, corn and soybean oils, in seeds and nuts, and wheat germ, cumin, and soy.
- Vitamin E might protect against UVB damage (which is much more carcinogenic than UVA and causes sunburns), and is commonly used to help wound healing.

## CARATANOIDS

- Beta-carotene is found in natural orange-colored foods, including sweet potatoes, carrots, cantaloupe, pumpkin, and mangos, and along with lutein in some green, leafy vegetables, including collard greens, spinach, and kale.
- Lycopene is a potent antioxidant found in tomatoes, watermelon, guava, papaya, and apricots.

## COENZYME Q10

- Found in fish and shell fish.
- Applied topically, it penetrates well and may reduce the breakdown of collagen after exposure to UVA light.
- May reduce the depth of wrinkles.