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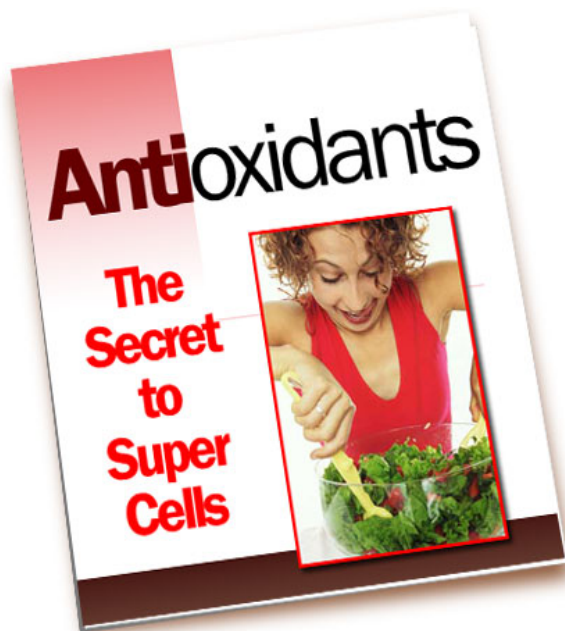
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Antioxidants – The Secret to Super Cells



Think for a moment that you are a cell.

You are inside your body where everything is running smoothly just like a machine. A biological machine, that is. This machine creates life and is the very reason why you are even sitting in front of your computer right now and imagining you are a cell and that you are inside your own body.

As this machine keeps running, day in and day out, it begins to wear out. You, as a cell, begin to feel the friction and processes that lead to your damage. Your enemy is the free radical, tiny little entities that are highly destructive and generated by biochemical processes – processes that you, yourself, take part in, although free radicals may also be introduced through environmental pollutants, exposure to UV radiation, and other sources.

The free radicals will start to create havoc around you. You try to fight it, but as time goes, you begin to lose the battle. What else is to be expected? You are just one tiny cell against a sea of free radicals. Furthermore, the free radical is not your only enemy. Sooner or later, you may have to give in to disease, old age, and ultimately death.

So, in truth, everything is working against you. And, in truth, your battle would be over much sooner were it not for the numerous mechanisms that you and other mammalian cells developed over millions of years.

These mechanisms were specifically evolved to serve as protection from the injury that can result from your normal functional processes. One such internal protective system is the ***Antioxidant System***.

The Antioxidant

Have you ever felt like wishing you had more energy? That you could get rid of those nagging aches and pains? Have you ever wished to improve your health overall and not just that, but *once and for all*?

If you answered yes, then look out, because that answer is now!

Today's medical science has led to several wondrous discoveries about our health and the food we eat. You might be familiar with the saying, "An apple a day keeps the doctor away." And it's true because recent studies show that there are certain substances found in fresh fruits and vegetables that can be very beneficial to our health. Such substances are called ***antioxidants***.

When you slice an apple and leave it on the table, you will notice that the flesh turns brown after some time. This is caused by ***oxidation*** – when the oxygen in the air reacts with the substances found in the apple.

Oxidation is a natural process that occurs in the human body as well. Our cells need oxidation in order to undergo metabolism of fats and glucose so they can turn into heat and energy. Oxidation is a vital part of life. But as vital as oxidation is, it can also have some negative effects on the body.

During the process of oxidation, highly unstable substances called ***free radicals*** are produced. These free radicals react with other molecules in the cell by stealing their electrons and turning them into free radicals like themselves. When this happens, a chain reaction is created, one that when accumulated could result in massive cell damage.

The job of antioxidants is to hunt down free radicals but not to eliminate them. No. But to neutralize them so they'll stop their disease-causing rampaging. Literary tools aside, antioxidants

do indeed react against the harmful effects of free radicals by stopping them from reacting with the molecules in the first place.

Some antioxidants may also act primarily to break off the chain reaction of free radicals. Others act by repairing damages caused by the accumulation of free radicals in tissues.

Countless studies have been devoted to determining the extent of the health benefits antioxidants may have. Antioxidants have been the subject of various cancer research studies and even research on how to reverse aging. In more recent years, studies on antioxidants are focused more on how to prevent degenerative diseases that affect the body's brain processes. These studies led to the discovery of a master antioxidant, the ***Glutathione***.

Glutathione - The Brain's Master Antioxidant

According to Dr. Jimmy Gutman, "The brain is particularly susceptible to free radical attack because it generates more oxidative by-products per gram of tissue than any other organ."

He further added that many neurological and psychiatric disease processes are characterized by...abnormalities in glutathione metabolism and antioxidant defenses. This led scientists to conclude that generation of reactive oxygen species (free radicals) and oxidative damage are an important cause of neuron (brain cell) death from brain injury.

A small molecule, Glutathione is actually composed of three amino acids – ***glycine, glutamate,*** and ***cysteine***. Together, these three amino acid types contained in Glutathione act as your cellular "super-mop", soaking up free radicals with the help of the sulfur-containing portion of the cysteine molecule.

In addition, Glutathione also helps protect the cellular membranes and internal organs of your body from cascading destruction these free radicals can cause.

These functions of Glutathione make the substance a major antioxidant *produced* by the human body as protection from free radicals. In research studies of old, scientists proclaimed that humans are one of the few animal species that are incapable of producing their own brand of antioxidant to fight against free radical damage. However, with the discovery of Glutathione, that theory has just been disproved.

Glutathione and the Brain

An important cause of neuron or brain cell death due to brain injury is the degeneration of reactive oxygen species (free radicals), and the resulting oxidative damage. In addition, there are chemicals that cause toxicity particularly to certain brain cells. Such chemicals are also known to decrease cerebral glutathione (GSH), making the cells more vulnerable to reactive oxygen species (ROS).

On the other hand, over-expression of the ***glutathione peroxidase (GPX) enzyme*** potentially decreases cell death from brain injury.

A research study by scientists at the Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh was recently conducted. The study showed that males and females respond differently to brain injury.

Using animal models, the researchers found that levels of Glutathione remain constant in females who have suffered brain injury, but drop by as much as 80 percent in males with the same injury.

It has been consistently found that when Glutathione levels drop, brain cells die much more quickly. This suggests that boys with brain injuries may require different live-saving treatments than girls.

A primary cause of degenerative diseases like Alzheimer's Disease and Parkinson's Disease is free radicals and oxidative damage in neurons. In one study, genetics researchers have found that there might be a significant genetic connection between these kinds of brain disorders and the presence of Glutathione in the body. They found that the ***glutathione S-transferase gene*** controls the onset of Alzheimer's, Parkinson's disease, and determines, not *if* we get the disease, but *when*.

Considered a pathological hallmark of Alzheimer's Disease (AD), amyloid-B peptide (AB) had been implicated in neuronal degeneration as well. Apparently, the encroachment of amyloid plaques on the grain increases the production of free radicals, or oxidative stress. And the more oxidative stress the cells in the brain go through, the more likely massive brain cell damage occurs, leading to disorders like Alzheimer's.

If you take in a lot of antioxidants like vitamin C and vitamin E, you have a marginal chance of preventing this. These vitamins help "mop up" the damaging free radicals, but their function in the brain is minimal. The real story lies in ***Glutathione (GSH) precursors***. They are the ones that can really prevent death of brain cells as induced by amyloid plaques in Alzheimer's disease.

Evidence has been piling up over the link between the amount of an amino acid called **homocysteine** in the blood and the chance of developing Alzheimer's.

There are, after all, people who supposedly do not have the genetic mark up to develop Alzheimer's Disease and yet, develop the disorder anyway later on in their life. Scientists say that cholesterol and homocysteine, both largely caused by an unhealthy lifestyle, are the core causal factors.

Andrew McCaddon, Welsh GP, showed that the more homocysteine that patients with Alzheimer's had, the worse their mental performance, and the worse their "cognitive impairment," the less they had of the antioxidant glutathione.

Other Functions of Glutathione

Besides being a major brain antioxidant, Glutathione is also a very important detoxifying agent. The substance enables you to get rid of undesirable toxins and pollutants that when accumulated in the body may lead to development of highly destructive free radical chains. For this reason, high content levels of Glutathione can be found in the liver, kidney, or lungs, which are the main organs most exposed to the greatest levels of toxins.

As a powerful antioxidant, Glutathione helps you dispose of many cancer-producing chemicals, heavy metals, drug metabolites, etc. that invade the pristine recesses of your cellular system. What makes Glutathione even more amazing is that your body was designed to allow you to use Glutathione so you can recycle other well-known antioxidants, such as vitamin C and vitamin E, keeping them in their active state and ready as ever to seek out free radicals.

Glutathione is good for your immune system. Glutathione is required to carry out many of the intricate steps needed to carry out your essential immune response functions, such as:

- Multiplying to make many immune response cell clones
- Mount a full-bodied immune response against harmful toxins
- "Neutralizing" undesirable elements of the cellular community, like cancerous or virally infected cells

How Glutathione Works

As wonderful as Glutathione is, there is, however, a catch to how it functions as an antioxidant. For one, the cell membrane is semi-permeable, which is really just another scientific jargon for “finicky.” It will not allow just anything to cross over directly into the cellular spaces within, anything including whole Glutathione molecules.

So to compensate for this minor downside, Glutathione neutralizes destructive free radicals or toxin by binding itself with the undesirable element. Apparently, this is the only way a Glutathione molecule can properly perform its function. The binding is fatal, of course, to *both* the Glutathione molecule and the free radical, but once bound, both are then washed out in the bile or the urine.

Now, the only question left is how do you replenish your stores of Glutathione and get your daily fix of the antioxidant?

How to Boost Glutathione and Other Antioxidants in the Body

Taking a single dose of Glutathione orally cannot increase your body’s Glutathione levels to clinically beneficial extent. Unlike other antioxidants, like Vitamin C and A, Glutathione is manufactured *inside* the body, so simply ingesting oral supplements of the antioxidant – like you do with other antioxidants - won’t do the trick.

How does your body manufacture Glutathione?

Well, first your cells must have the precursor amino acids of Glutathione, and these are what else but glycine, glutamate, and cysteine. Hence, if you want to boost up your Glutathione, you must take food sources or supplements that increase or provide the precursors of Glutathione. If not that, then choose those food types that enhance its production by some other means.

Once your body has all the necessary amino acids, then that will be the time when it will start the manufacture of more Glutathione that seek out and rid your body of harmful toxins.

However, the manufacture of Glutathione in cells is limited by the levels of its sulphur-containing precursor amino acid, cysteine.

Cysteine is a free amino acid and can be potentially toxic. Because of this, it is spontaneously catabolized or destroyed in the gastrointestinal tract and blood plasma. However, when it is present as a cysteine-cysteine dipeptide, called ***cystine***, it is more stable than cysteine and has less potential for toxicity.

To help boost your Glutathione levels, consume foods rich in sulphur-containing amino acids. Below are some food sources and dietary supplements that help boost Glutathione levels naturally:

- ***N-Acetylcysteine (NAC)***

Derived from the amino acid L-Cysteine, NAC acts as a precursor of Glutathione immediately after entering the body where it is quickly metabolized into Glutathione. Numerous scientific studies and clinical trials have proven that NAC can boost intracellular production of Glutathione, and is approved by the FDA for treatment of acetaminophen overdose. The mucolytic action of Glutathione has also led to the use of NAC as a common treatment of lung diseases, such as cystic fibrosis, bronchitis, and asthma.

- ***Milk Thistle, Silymarin***

Milk Thistle contains a powerful antioxidant that supports the liver by preventing the depletion of Glutathione. The active compound found in milk thistle is called ***silymarin*** and it is this natural liver detoxifier that is responsible for the protection of the liver from many industrial toxins, such as carbon tetrachloride, and more common agents like alcohol.

- ***Alpha Lipoic Acid***

Alpha Lipoic Acid or ALA is made naturally in body cells as a by-product of energy release. One of the functions of ALA is to increase the levels of intracellular Glutathione. In addition, ALA also acts as a natural antioxidant, with effective free radical scavenging abilities. Not only that, it also has the ability to regenerate oxidized antioxidants like Vitamin C and E and helps them more potent the second time around.

With both their protective effects on the brain, ALA and Glutathione can be a potent combination when it comes to seeking and destroying free radicals causing brain cell damage.

- ***Natural Foods***

Asparagus is considered the leading source of Glutathione. Foods that are also known to boost Glutathione levels in the body include broccoli, avocado, and spinach. A diet high in fresh fruits and vegetables and freshly prepared meats should give you enough glutamate and glycine. However, if you want your source of cystine, you should also include milk, cheese, garlic, and fresh unprocessed meats in your diet. These foods contain high levels of sulphur-containing amino acids and help to maintain optimal Glutathione levels.

Eggs can also be a rich source of cystine. However, if you cook the eggs (as well as cheese and milk) or process it, the composition of cystine is changed to cysteine, still a valuable protein but won't boost your Glutathione supply. So make sure that you eat raw eggs, unpasteurized milk and cheese if you want enough Glutathione in your body.

- ***Undenatured Whey Protein Isolate***

Whey protein contains proteins like ***alpha-lactalbumin*** which is rich in sulphur-containing amino acids. Heating or pasteurization destroys the delicate disulphide bonds that give these proteins their bioactivity. For this reason, undenatured whey protein is recommended. A non-heated product, undenatured whey protein preserves the bio amino acids like cystine, preventing them from being metabolized into cysteine which won't optimize Glutathione levels at all.

- ***Curcumin (Turmeric)***

Treatment of brain cells called astrocytes, with the Indian curry spice, curcumin (turmeric) has been found to increase expression of the glutathione S-transferase. It can also protect neurons exposed to oxidative stress.

- ***Balloon Flower Root***

A Chinese herbal medicine, the Balloon Flower Root, otherwise known as Jie Geng or *Platycodon gradiflorum* A. DC (Campanulaceae) contains Changkil saponins (CKS) in its roots. When separated from the plant, these substances have been found to increase intracellular glutathione (GSH) content and significantly reduce oxidative injury to liver cells, minimize cell death, and lipid peroxidation.

- ***Selenium***

Itself a powerful antioxidant, selenium can also be an effective co-factor for the enzyme glutathione peroxidase. Selenium supplement shave become popular because some studies suggest they may play a role in decreasing the risk of certain cancers, and in how the immune system and the thyroid gland function.

However, be wary when taking supplements of this mineral. Too much selenium has been known to have some toxic effects, not least of which include gastrointestinal upset, brittle nails, hair loss, and even mild nerve damage.

So your cells may not be super cells in that they can lose eventually to several factors that lead to human death. But, by getting enough Glutathione precursors in your body, you can increase your Glutathione levels, giving you a better and strategic advantage in your cells' mortal battle against free radicals.

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