

Ask the Expert:

What are Antioxidants?

Written by Emma Araya, Purdue University Dietetics & Nutrition, Fitness, and Health '26

Promotion of antioxidants in the foods we eat have become popular in the last few years. We may often see antioxidants highlighted on food packages, but many people may not know what antioxidants are and what they do.

According to the National Cancer Institute, an antioxidant is a substance that protects cells from damage produced by “free radicals” which are byproducts of our body making energy from food. Free radicals are particularly harmful because they can play a role in cancer, heart disease, stroke, and other diseases that come with age. Beta-carotene, lycopene, vitamins A, C and E are all examples of antioxidants. Our bodies need a consistent supply of antioxidants to help protect against the damage that free radicals do when there are no antioxidants to stop them. Antioxidants can be found in many foods. From broccoli, grapefruit, and leafy greens to tea, blueberries, strawberries, and sweet potatoes.

It is best to get antioxidants from food because they are present in many natural sources and antioxidants work best in combination with other nutrients, plant chemicals, and other antioxidants. Antioxidant supplements may not show significant health benefits when taken alone because they may not have the benefits of working with other nutrients and chemicals. Always make sure to talk to a specialist or Registered Dietitian to find out what's best for you.

Source: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/antioxidants/>



IN THIS ISSUE

Ask the Expert: What are Antioxidants?	1
Food Safety: Safe Fruit and Vegetable Handling	2
Eating Right: Foods for Healthy Eyes	3
In the News: March was Healthy Vision Month!	4

Food Safety: Safe Fruit and Vegetable Handling

Written by Emma Araya, Purdue University Dietetics & Nutrition, Fitness, and Health '26

As spring winds down, fresh fruits and vegetables are the perfect snack for a hot summer day. They are a great way to add nutrients in your diet and they can help prevent stroke, heart disease, and other health problems. However, sometimes raw fruits and vegetables can hold harmful germs and bacteria that can make you sick. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, germs on fresh produce are the reason for most cases of foodborne illnesses in the United States.

You can enjoy raw fruits and vegetables by following these steps to reduce your risk of food poisoning:

- Choose produce that is not discolored, bruised, or damaged.
- Separate fruits and vegetables from raw meat, poultry, and seafood.
- At the grocery store, make sure fruits and vegetables are sealed or closed, even in your grocery bags.
- Wash your hands and other things that touch your produce including chopping boards, countertops, utensils, and any surface that meets food.
- Make sure to wash your produce before preparing or eating it. Washing the peel is important even if you will cut away the peel because the knife can transfer bacteria to the part of the produce that will be eaten.



Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/communication/steps-healthy-fruits-veggies.html#:~:text=Wash%20or%20scrub%20fruits%20and,produce%20wash%20>

Lentil Minestrone

Directions

1. Set a big pot over medium-high heat and add oil. Add onion and garlic and cook for 7 minutes until golden
3. Add carrots, celery, sweet potato, and zucchini. Cook for 10 minutes until slightly soft.
4. Put 8 cups of water in the pot. Then, add tomatoes, lentils, chicken bouillon cube and bring to a boil over high heat.
5. Turn the heat down to low, cover and cook for 40 minutes.
6. Add kale or spinach and cook for 20 additional minutes.
7. Serve and enjoy!

Ingredients (6 servings)

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil*
- 1 yellow onion (chopped)
- 2 cloves garlic (minced)
- 3 carrots (diced)*
- 1 celery stalk (diced)
- 1 sweet potato (diced)*
- 1 zucchini (diced)
- 2 cups canned tomatoes*
- 1/2 cup lentils*
- 1 cube chicken bouillon



Nutrition Facts (per serving)

Calories: 167
Protein: 8g
Carbs: 29g
Fat: 3g

***foods included in the TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program)**

Sources: <https://www.myplate.gov/recipes/myplate-cnpp/lentil-minestrone>

Eating Right: Foods for Healthy Eyes

Written by Emma Araya, Purdue University Dietetics & Nutrition, Fitness, and Health '26

Healthy Vision Month highlights eye-healthy foods that are simple and efficient to add to a diet and contain nutrients that prevent cataracts, glaucoma, and other eye related problems. The best way to include eye healthy vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants in your diet are through eating fruits, vegetables, and foods high in Omega-3 fatty acids. There are many ways to prepare these foods that allow you to get all the benefits. They can be fresh, frozen, or canned.

Some examples of eye-healthy foods include:

- Leafy greens:**

Kale, collard greens, spinach. Dark leafy greens are high in Vitamin A and some beta-carotene. These foods can help protect your eye tissues from the sun and reduce age related eye changes.

- Sweet Potatoes and Carrots:**

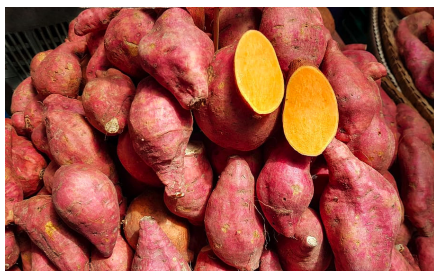
Beta-carotene gives sweet potatoes and carrots their orange color. Beta-carotene helps prevent night blindness and age-related macular degeneration. Try butternut squash too!

- Fresh Berries (strawberries, blueberries, blackberries):**

With loads of vitamin C, fresh berries may help lower your risk of cataracts.

- Healthy Fats:**

Salmon, mackerel, and tuna are excellent sources of omega-3 fatty acids. They can help with dryness and keep your eyes in check. It is important to note that adding a source of fat to your snacks and meals helps your body absorb vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants in your food. Sprinkle some cheese on your salad or add a few slices of avocado to your dinner.



Source: <https://www.eatright.org/health/wellness/healthful-habits/5-top-foods-for-eye-health>



First Class
Presort Mail
U.S. Postage
PAID
Lafayette, IN
Permit No. 221

Send comments and/or change of address to:
Indiana's Emergency Food Resource Network
Department of Nutrition Science
Purdue University
700 West State Street
West Lafayette, IN 47907-2059
Phone: (765) 496-0271
Fax: (765) 494-9606
Email: earaya@purdue.edu
Website: www.purdue.edu/indianasefrnetwork/

This newsletter is edited by Emma Araya and Heather A. Eicher-Miller, PhD and is created by the Eicher-Miller Lab in the Department of Nutrition Science at Purdue University. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

PAGE 4

IN THE NEWS

In The News: May was Healthy Vision Month!

Written by Emma Araya, Purdue University Dietetics & Nutrition, Fitness, and Health '26

May marked HealthyVision Month! Prioritizing your eye health can help you keep safe and healthy. After all, we use our vision every day for almost everything we do!

Make sure to get regular eye exams, especially if you are at risk or have a family history of eye problems. Knowing your family history of eye disease can be crucial to know what plan is best for you.

Healthy eating and physical activity can help lower your risk. By eating a diet full of fruits, vegetables, lean meats and dairy, and limiting sugar, you can help lower your risk of getting diabetes and high blood pressure that can also put your eye health at risk. Taking care of your eye health by practicing a healthy diet and lifestyle will help keep your overall health in check too!

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/visionhealth/resources/features/eye-health-my-health.html>
<https://www.cdc.gov/visionhealth/healthyvisionmonth/index.htm>

