

[IMAGE]

Give Yourself the Gift of Antioxidants

Dietary antioxidants like beta-carotene and vitamins C and E are known to aid in the prevention of some cancers. Do they also effectively avert the onset of cardiovascular diseases of the heart and blood vessels? Observational studies in the past have shown that these antioxidants may protect against incidences of cardiovascular disease and death, but now there may be more conclusive evidence.

To determine if dietary antioxidants are related to the presence of peripheral arterial disease (a cardiovascular disease), the authors analyzed data on approximately 4,400 people in the Rotterdam Study. This study was designed to investigate cases of long-term, disabling diseases and their risk factors in the Netherlands. The 55- to 94-year-olds' diets were evaluated, and peripheral arterial disease was examined using blood pressure readings in the hands and feet.

Eating foods high in antioxidants decreased incidences of peripheral arterial disease, but with differences between genders. In women, subjects with high vitamin C intake were less likely to have the disease, compared to those with low intake of vitamin C. Men with high vitamin E intake, on the other hand, were less likely to have cardiovascular disease than those with low intake.

Women: You can get natural vitamin C in high concentrations from fruits and vegetables like oranges, green peppers, tomatoes, watermelons, and leafy greens. Try to eat these foods raw or lightly cooked for higher vitamin concentrations.

Men: Be sure to eat foods rich in vitamin E, such as soybean and vegetable oils, nuts, spinach, and sweet potatoes. Wheat germ oil, although less common, has the highest amount of natural vitamin E.

Both men and women should eat a variety of these foods to obtain the other health benefits of these vitamins.

Reference: Klipstein-Grobusch K, den Breeijen JH, Grobbee DE, et al. Dietary antioxidants and peripheral arterial disease: The Rotterdam Study. *American Journal of Epidemiology* 2001;154(2), pp. 145-149.

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