

High antioxidant foods you must eat regularly

You have been told to eat foods that are good for your stomach and those that protect your heart but what about replenishing the cells that make up these critical organs in our body? Antioxidant foods can do this and much more.

BY BEATRICE NAKIBUUKA
bnakibuuka@ug.nationmedia.com

An antioxidant is a molecule that constrains the oxidation of other molecules. If oxidation takes place, there is production of free radicals, leading to chain reactions that may damage cells. Antioxidants therefore help prevent cell damage caused by oxidants. The antioxidants compounds naturally occur in certain fruits and vegetables and they come with several benefits to the body.

Bridget Kezaabu, a nutritionist, says often times the body produces oxidants (free radicals) to defend itself against bacteria and viruses. When they become too many in number, they may start attacking and harming the cells and even put you at risk of diseases such as heart trouble and cancer.

"There are also oxidants from environmental pollutants, smoke or alcohol. The antioxidants therefore help the body by neutralizing and removing these oxidants from your bloodstream," she says.

Daily intake of anti-oxidants also helps in boosting the body's immunity to protect you from heart, eye and memory problems as well as mood disorders.

Tomatoes

Tomatoes are packed with three types of antioxidants - Lycopene (that gives tomato its bright red colour), Vitamin C and Vitamin A. Vitamin C is one of the most potent kinds of antioxidants that you can derive from fruits and vegetables. "They contain nutrients that act as body cleansers. They are good for your skin and contain vitamin B and potassium which are good for your heart and kidney," Kezaabu remarks.

Broccoli

Broccoli is one of the best sources of antioxidants such as carotenoids lutein, zeaxanthin and beta-carotene

compared to other vegetables.

"The best way to cook broccoli is by steaming it. Remember that some antioxidants such as Vitamin C are completely destroyed by heat while others such as beta-carotene become more potent on cooking the vegetable," she says.

Oranges

Oranges are an excellent source of vitamin C and a good intake of this citrus fruit daily is associated with a reduced risk of colon cancer as the antioxidant nutrient in them helps to prevent free radicals that cause damage to the body DNA cells thereby causing cancer.

"The vitamin C in the oranges protect the skin from damage caused by the sun and pollution. It is vital to

collagen production and may help reduce wrinkles and improve the skin's overall texture," Kezaabu says.

Mangoes

Mangoes offer an excellent source of vitamin A flavonoids such as beta-carotene, alpha-carotene, and beta-cryptoxanthin. These compounds have antioxidant properties and are helpful in maintaining healthy vision as well as a glowing and radiant skin

Beetroot

Beetroot contains betalain antioxidant an anti-inflammatory and fungicidal which helps in detoxification. Betalain is also believed to protect against cancer.

Strawberries

Strawberries are rich in antioxidant power which can fight carcinogens and bad cholesterol that is known to cause heart disease. Strawberries contain, anthocyanins, the antioxidants that protect against cardiovascular diseases.

Garlic

Kezaabu says: "Garlic plays an important dietary and medicinal role in our bodies and treats a variety of ailments such as cardiovascular problems, prevents oxidation to stop cancer and several infections. It is important to note however that excess consumption of garlic can be toxic to the liver."

Others foods include green tea, spinach, kale, mushroom, turmeric, ginger, onions, egg plants, red grapes and maize among others.

