



Antioxidants Protect Against Periodontitis

Higher serum levels of antioxidants—particularly vitamin C—are associated with a reduced risk of periodontitis, a serious infection that destroys tissues supporting the teeth and increases the risk of stroke, type II diabetes, and heart disease.*

Scientists examined periodontitis measurements and antioxidant levels in more than 11,000 adults. Fourteen percent had mild disease, and 5% had severe disease. Higher levels of vitamin C and total antioxidants were linked to a lower incidence of periodontitis: those with the highest vitamin C levels had a 39-50% lower risk of periodontitis compared to those with the lowest levels.

In addition to scavenging free radicals and reducing inflammation, vitamin C is involved in collagen synthesis, which helps maintain the structure and integrity of connective tissue.

—Dayna Dye

* Chapple IL, Milward MR, Dietrich T. The prevalence of inflammatory periodontitis is negatively associated with serum antioxidant concentrations. *J Nutr.* 2007 Mar;137(3):657-64.

Watercress Consumption Prevents DNA Damage

Consuming watercress helps protect against DNA damage, which could reduce the risk of cancer, according to a recent study.* Intake of cruciferous vegetables such as watercress, broccoli, and cabbage is associated with a lower risk of numerous cancers.

Sixty men and women, half of whom were smokers, consumed their usual diet plus 85 grams of raw watercress daily for eight weeks. Blood samples were analyzed for plasma antioxidant status and DNA damage in lymphocytes, a type of white blood cell. Watercress consumption significantly reduced lymphocyte DNA damage, with greater effects in smokers. Plasma lutein levels doubled following watercress supplementation, while beta-carotene concentrations rose by approximately one third.

Scientists believe that antioxidants in watercress—namely, lutein, beta-carotene, rutin, and glucosinolates—may be responsible for its protective effects.

—Dayna Dye

* Gill CI, Halder S, Boyd LA, et al. Watercress supplementation in diet reduces lymphocyte DNA damage and alters blood antioxidant status in healthy adults. *Am J Clin Nutr.* 2007 Feb;85(2):504-10.



Zinc Lowers Infection Rates in Elderly Adults

Daily supplementation with zinc reduces the incidence of infections in elderly subjects, while decreasing markers of inflammation and oxidative stress, according to a new study.*

In a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial, scientists administered zinc gluconate (45 mg of elemental zinc per day) or placebo to healthy adults, aged 55-87, for one year. They documented the incidence of infections throughout the year, and assessed levels of inflammatory cytokines and markers of oxidative stress at the study's onset and conclusion.

Compared to the placebo group, zinc-supplemented adults had a markedly lower occurrence of infections, significantly lower generation of tumor necrosis factor-alpha (an inflammatory cytokine associated with arthritis and cancer), and decreased oxidative stress markers.

—Elizabeth Wagner, ND



* Prasad AS, Beck FW, Bao B, et al. Zinc supplementation decreases incidence of infections in the elderly: effect of zinc on generation of cytokines and oxidative stress. *Am J Clin Nutr.* 2007 Mar;85(3):837-44.

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