



Learn your antioxidant alphabet

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Many students wake up in the morning and head toward the dining halls to jumpstart their days. After they put together some sort of decent meal, they head to the juice dispenser or grab cups of coffee. The juice students grab in the morning has many more health benefits than most might think.

"I never really stop and think about the health benefits of most of the foods I eat," said Kendra Richardson, a 6th-semester journalism major. "I eat what I like, but it's good to know that some of the things I like have benefits."

Vitamin C, which is found in orange juice, is one of several well-known antioxidants. Antioxidants are abundant in most fruits and vegetables, as well as in grains, meat, poultry, fish and nuts.

"Antioxidants are substances or nutrients in our foods which can prevent or slow the oxidative damage to our body," according to healthcastle.com. "When our body cells use oxygen, they naturally produce free radicals (by-products) which can cause damage. Antioxidants act as 'free radical scavengers' and hence prevent and repair damage done by these free radicals."

"If I have a cold or I'm sick I do drink orange juice and it makes me feel better," Richardson said. "Now I guess I understand why."

Amy Pumerantz, nutrition coordinator and health educator and Anna Surdykowski, a registered dietitian at Student Health Services, had some advice for students about the intake of antioxidants.

"For some conditions and diseases it may be strongly recommended to take one of these antioxidants," Pumerantz said. "If you wish to take an antioxidant as a supplement, it is important to speak to your healthcare provider (doctor, nurse, registered dietitian) to discuss your need and safe dose."

The most commonly known antioxidants, according to healthcastle.com, are vitamin A, carotenoids, vitamin E and selenium.

For vitamin A, try eating broccoli, sweet potatoes, kale, collards, cantaloupe or squash among many other brightly colored vegetables. Nuts and seeds, green leafy vegetables, whole grains, liver oil and vegetable oil are good sources of vitamin E.

As for selenium, try increasing your intake of red meat, eggs, chicken, garlic, shellfish and fish.

"Because it boosts the body's antioxidant capacity, selenium is thought to have some ability to control cell damage that may lead to cancer," according to healthcastle.com.

"Regardless of whether or not you take an antioxidant supplement, it is important to incorporate a variety of fruits and vegetables and whole grains into your diet," Pumerantz said.

Surdykowski also commented on the overall benefits of these high-antioxidant foods in general. "Aside from their potential antioxidant benefits, these foods have a wealth of other nutritional benefits," said Surykowski. "Such as a high fiber and vitamin and mineral content!"

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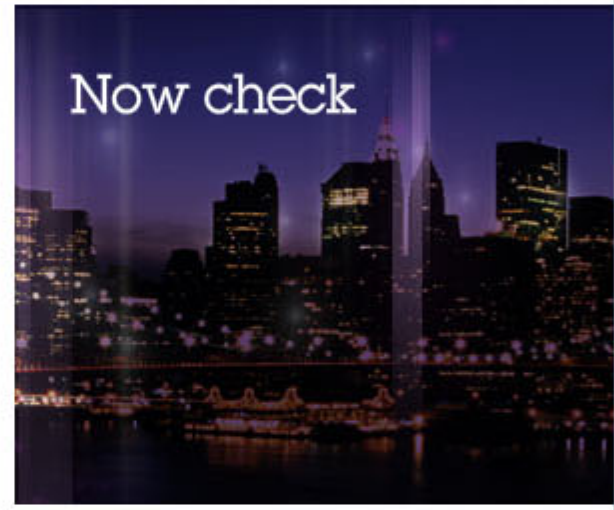
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