

Abstract:

Antioxidant-the word itself is magic. Using the antioxidant concept as a spearhead in proposed mechanisms for staving off so-called "free-radical" reactions, the rush is on to mine claims for the latest and most effective combination of free-radical scavenging compounds. We must acknowledge that such "radicals" have definitively been shown to damage all biochemical components such as DNA/RNA, carbohydrates, unsaturated lipids, proteins, and micronutrients such as carotenoids (alpha and beta carotene, lycopene), vitamins A, B6, B12, and folate. Defense strategies against such aggressive radical species include enzymes, antioxidants that occur naturally in the body (glutathione, uric acid, ubiquinol-10, and others) and radical scavenging nutrients, such as vitamins A, C, and E, and carotenoids. This paper will present a brief discussion of some well- and little-known herbs that may add to the optimization of antioxidant status and therefore offer added preventive values for overall health. It is important to state at the outset that antioxidants vary widely in their free-radical quenching effects and each may be individually attracted to specific cell sites. Further evidence of the specialized nature of the carotenoids is demonstrated by the appearance of two carotenoids in the macula region of the retina where beta-carotene is totally absent.