

RUST PROOFING OUR BODIES

by Dr Karen Coates

Antioxidants, an essential utensil in our anti-ageing tool box.

What makes the difference between average health and optimal health? The answer lies not in the genetic blueprint of your family tree, but in our body's ability to be well nourished and 'rustproofed'.

Our three top killers in the developed world are cardiovascular disease (encompassing heart attack and stroke), cancer, and Type 2 Diabetes. Your risk of developing any of these diseases has been proven to be directly related to the amount of antioxidants your diet provides.

Antioxidants found in food protect our cells against the damage done by free radicals, known as oxidative stress.

Damage is particularly intense in the powerhouse of our cells known as the mitochondria. Free radicals are unbound oxygen molecules that bombard and damage our cells and capillaries. Recent research indicates that poorly nourished cells are more vulnerable to oxidative stress and have a higher requirement for antioxidant-rich food and supplements. This creates a double insult, with poor nutrition leading to micro-malnourished, vulnerable cells and an increased need for antioxidant protection in the presence of a diet inadequate for optimal health.

Most natural therapists will be aware of the importance of antioxidants for skin health, rejuvenation, collagen production and the prevention of skin cancers. More importantly antioxidants forge a resilient barrier of protection to cells undergoing renewal. It is at this time of cell division that the mistakes in genetic messages may lead to uncontrolled growth which we call cancer.

Incredibly, medical research has only recently confirmed what natural therapists and vets have known for decades: that over 70 percent of the Australian population are micronutrient-malnourished. Regardless of body weight the average Australian on an average Australian diet (the traditional meat and three veggies for dinner) is lacking in at least one or more essential nutrients, in particular the antioxidant group of nutrients.

The cause for this is clear. In 1992 a World Health Organisation survey reported that Australian soils are the most mineral and vitamin deficient of all the soils of the world's continents. It makes commonsense that the fruit, vegetables and grains cultivated on these soils are also lacking in the nutrients required for optimal human health. Our vets regularly provide supplements for cattle, sheep and horses to prevent and treat nutritional deficiencies, but the medical profession has been kept in the dark about these facts for years.

How to Assess your Risk of Oxidative Stress

Live blood analysis is a useful health practitioner tool. This can instantly confirm the cellular consequences of poor diet, oxidative stress, by examining a droplet of fresh blood under a microscope. These damaged cells look somewhat like a dried up sultana on live blood analysis. Compare this to a healthy hydrated cell, full of antioxidants, which looks like a luscious, full-bodied grape.

The most important defence we have against unfavourable environmental chemicals and our major health challenges is a well nourished body. Sensible supplementation is essential for optimal health when deficiencies are suspected. Plant extracted organic supplements, with high ORAC scores and phenolic content are preferred, together with a balanced organic diet and a healthy bowel.

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