



DYNAMIC AGING

"Rust" Prevention

Neil Young sang that "rust never sleeps." George Burns told us that "today, you don't have to worry about growing old, you have to worry about rusting." They had no idea how right they were. The very thing we breathe, oxygen, not only rusts cars but it actually "rusts" us! What is one way to slow down or prevent that rusting, or oxidation? Eat foods high in antioxidants.

What is an antioxidant? The American Dietetic Association describes antioxidants as dietary substances including some nutrients such as beta carotene, vitamins C and E and selenium, that can prevent damage to your body cells or repair damage that has been done.

The antioxidant process is similar to stopping an apple from browning. Once you cut an apple, it begins to brown, but if you dip it in orange juice, which contains vitamin C, it stays white. Antioxidants in your body work by significantly slowing or preventing the oxidative process, or damage from oxygen, which is caused by substances called free radicals. Free radicals can lead to cell dysfunction and the onset of problems like heart disease and diabetes. Evidence also suggests that low dietary intakes of vitamins C and E and carotenoids increase cataract risk and macular degeneration. On the flip side, antioxidants may actually improve immune function and perhaps lower your risk for infection and cancer.

Antioxidants in foods. An eating plan containing plenty of fruits and vegetables, whole grains and nuts can supply all the antioxidants your body needs. One fruit that deserves special mention is the prolific blueberry. Not only are blueberries an important part of Maine's economy, they also yield a potent antioxidant punch. According to a 2004 article in the Journal of Agriculture and Food Chemistry, antioxidants are highly concentrated in the deep blue pigments of wild blueberries and a one cup serving has more total antioxidant capacity than a serving of cranberries, strawberries, plums, or raspberries. Plus, a cup of blueberries is only 84 calories. Try mixing them with non fat yogurt at breakfast or for an afternoon treat.