

ANTIOXIDANTS

What are antioxidants?

Antioxidants are products the body uses to remove or disarm the more damaging products in the body.

Why do we need antioxidants?

Present in the body are oxidative free radicals – whilst these are essential they can be destructive. These often result from age-related breakdown in tissue. The products to remove these free radicals may be deficient in the natural body and in the dietary intake. Antioxidants rid the body of these free radicals.

Who should take antioxidant/vitamin supplements?

Persons who show early typical changes of macular degeneration; persons with a strong family history could begin supplements in their 40s. It may not be beneficial for people who have already developed advanced stages of neovascular macula degeneration (see notes below). Also persons with cataract could benefit.

Don't I get enough of the correct vitamins etc from my diet?

Older people have decreased bio-availability of zinc and other elements due to decreased absorption. Also there is less stomach acid, less zinc released from food and, especially if the diet is high in fibre, there is a subsequent increased nutrient loss. So a supplement may be of benefit.

Does it work?

Scientific support for antioxidant supplementation is increasing. Present evidence indicates that many people, though not all, will benefit.

How soon can I expect to see better?

Patients who improve usually notice better vision one to three months after starting broad spectrum antioxidant supplements in the case of cataract.

How much do I need to take?

It is not known and difficult to state exactly how much is required. Most studies are based on younger healthy individuals, so the daily recommended allowances may well be different for an older person. Further, the tablet supplements need to be taken on a continual basis.

Is there any risk in taking these supplements?

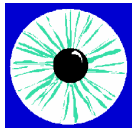
Recommended amounts of vitamin-mineral antioxidants have few risks. The risk/benefit ratio of antioxidant supplements for macula degeneration or cataract appears to be highly favourable to the patient.

(Note: AMD – the leading cause of new cases of blindness in persons aged 65 years and older – is classified as atrophic (dry) or neovascular (wet). The dry form is the more common, though the wet form tends to result in poorer vision.)

This leaflet is provided by...

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