



ANTIOXIDANT

An antioxidant is a molecule which decreases or prevents the oxidation of other substances. Oxidation can produce free radicals which may create destructive reactions. Free radicals attack cellular components (unsaturated fatty acids, nucleic acids, proteins), and thus contribute to the development of various pathologies and to ageing.

The main antioxidants known in food are Beta-carotene (provitamins A), ascorbic acid (vitamin C), tocopherol (vitamin E), selenium, polyphenols and lycopene. These include flavonoides (very widespread in plants), tannin (in cocoa, coffee, tea, grapes, etc), as well as anthocyanins and phenolic acids (in cereals, fruits and vegetables).

Dairy products such as whole milk, butter and cream contain considerable amounts of vitamin A and to a lesser extent, of vitamin E, thus contributing to the benefits of antioxidant substances.