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## Dietary antioxidants backed for lower heart attack risk in women



By Nathan Gray+  
24-Sep-2012

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**A diet rich in antioxidants could significantly reduce the risk of myocardial infarction in women, according to new research.**

The research – reported in *The American Journal of Medicine* – examines how total antioxidant capacity of diet and antioxidant-containing foods are associated with the incidence of myocardial infarction in women.



A diet rich in antioxidants could help to lower the risk of heart attacks in women, say researchers.

*“To our knowledge, no study has investigated the overall effect of the complex antioxidant network in diet in relation to coronary heart disease,”* explain the authors – led by Alicja Wolk of the Karolinska Institute, Sweden.

*“Our study was the first to look at the effect of all dietary antioxidants in relation to myocardial infarction,”* said Wolk – who revealed that her team found a diet rich in dietary antioxidants, mainly from fruits and vegetables can significantly reduce the risk of myocardial infarction.

*“In this large prospective population-based cohort study, we observed that higher total antioxidant capacity of diet was statistically significantly associated with lower risk of incident myocardial infarction in a dose-response manner,”* stated the authors.

The lead researcher noted that the findings are in contrast to those testing high doses of antioxidant supplements – which have in general failed to see any benefit on coronary heart disease and, in fact, in one study showed a higher incidence of all-cause mortality.

*“In contrast to supplements of single antioxidants, the dietary total antioxidant capacity reflects all present antioxidants, including thousands of compounds, all of them in doses present in our usual diet, and even takes into account their synergistic effects,”* explained Wolk.

#### Study details



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Wolk and her team followed 32,561 Swedish women aged 49-83 from September 1997 through December 2007.

All women completed a food-frequency questionnaire in which they were asked how often, on average, they consumed each type of food or beverage during the last year.

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The team then calculated estimates of total antioxidant capacity from a database that measures the oxygen radical absorption capacity (ORAC) of the most common. The women were categorized into five groups of total antioxidant capacity of diet.

Women in the group with the highest total antioxidant capacity consumed almost seven servings of fruit and vegetables per day were found to have a 20% lower risk of heart attack than those who consumed the lowest antioxidants (2.4 servings per day – three times less than those with the highest intake).

*“Our data suggest that a diet high in total antioxidant capacity is associated with lower risk of incident myocardial infarction,”* said Wolk and her team. *“The major contributors to dietary total antioxidant capacity were fruits, vegetables, coffee, and whole grains.”*

Source: *The American Journal of Medicine*

Volume 125, Issue 10, Pages 974–980, doi: [10.1016/j.amjmed.2012.03.008](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amjmed.2012.03.008)

*“Total Antioxidant Capacity from Diet and Risk of Myocardial Infarction: A Prospective Cohort of Women”*

Authors: S. Rautiainen, E.B. Levitan, N. Orsini, A. Åkesson, R. Morgenstern, M.A. Mittleman, A. Wolk

Keywords: antioxidant, myocardial infarction, heart attack, heart health, supplement

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