

Introductory Text

Research has for some time suggested that foods high in antioxidants seem to reduce the risk of heart disease and cancer by absorbing free radicals and stopping damage. But did you know that the mushroom is a powerful source of antioxidants? As part of an ongoing series, Accredited Practising Dietitian, author and university lecturer, Glenn Cardwell talks to Tony McManus. You are invited to LISTEN to the interview or alternatively download a transcript of the interview [HERE](#).

Mushrooms and antioxidants

Interview Glenn Cardwell / Tony McManus

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Tony - Glenn Cardwell is back with us - Accredited Practising Dietitian and author, university lecturer and an expert on mushroom nutrition. Glenn is here with us to answer some more questions on mushrooms and health. We have previously talked about the minerals and vitamin in mushrooms and you have mentioned the reason that they are so abundant in mushrooms is because mushrooms are neither a plant food, nor an animal food. In fact you could say they are in a class of their own. So, do they have the antioxidants that we hear so much about?

Glenn Cardwell - Oh absolutely Tony. In fact they are one of the highest antioxidant foods around.

Tony - Well let's go back in time. Just remind us again - what is an antioxidant?

Glenn Cardwell - For a long time scientists have known that foods that are high in antioxidants seem to reduce our risk of heart disease and some cancers. Antioxidants are compounds that stop damage occurring to things like the DNA in cells. People have heard of the term "free radicals". What antioxidants do is absorb the free radicals and stop the free radicals from causing damage within the body. So they are actually protecting the body from damage.

Tony - So what is the antioxidant power of the humble, but beautiful, mushroom?

Glenn Cardwell - There has been some recent research on the antioxidant power of mushrooms. In fact there is one recent paper looking at the 30 common vegetables and found that mushrooms are in the top five for antioxidant power. In 2005 they found another antioxidant called ergothienine

which was thought to be only mainly in wheat germ and chicken liver but there is far, far more ergothienine in mushrooms, and that is a very powerful antioxidant as well.

They are also finding things like phenolic compounds and selenium, with mushrooms being one of the higher sources of selenium, which we know is an antioxidant mineral. So overall mushrooms are probably one of the highest antioxidant foods in nature.

Tony - How much mushrooms should we be eating just to get the full benefits, the real antioxidant benefits?

Glenn Cardwell - you are looking at about 100 g of mushrooms each day and that works out to be about three button mushrooms in a serve. If you want to find out more information about the health benefits of mushrooms I suggest going to www.mushroomsforlife.net.