



Townhall Meeting

Should I Buy Antioxidant Superfruit Juices or Supplements?

Part 1



Dietary choices are in our own hands.

Should we be buying expensive antioxidant superfruit juices like the one featuring açai ("ah-sigh-ee") berries above?

[follow the [Wikipedia](#) links]

Berries and other fruits qualifying as [superfruits](#) are not only just enjoyable to eat, but we have an expectation from them: we want them to contribute [antioxidant](#) value in our diet.

If fresh berries or other superfruits are not convenient, however, many consumers turn to antioxidant superfruit juices, pills or powders for fighting [oxygen radicals](#).

The convenience factor of using juices, smoothies, powders or pills is important in consumer behavior and is unlikely to change, so we accept these more convenient product formats as semi-permanent ways of achieving nutrition.

But questions remain about what we're actually getting...

Do these products really provide benefit?

*Is the dietary antioxidant story really
all it's cracked up to be?*

Or are we buying the marketing message?

*In science, we want to hear all points of view, especially
those that put exaggerated marketing hype
under the spotlight of objective scrutiny.*

In a "Townhall Meeting", we stand on the stage with no props or camouflage of the truth -- it's just the audience, the speaker and the topic... all *undressed* of fanfare.

So for August, we're going to look at 3 questions each week to unravel the truth about antioxidant superfruit juices and supplements -- sold to consumers like Aspirin is for headaches.

Aspirin works.

What benefits do antioxidant superfruit juices really offer?



Question #1

What do we really want an antioxidant juice product to give us?

It's probably safe to say that consumers who buy superfruit beverages are focused on obtaining an expected health benefit, *particularly for antioxidants*.

"Consumers want to quickly 'dose' themselves, much like the ingestion of a daily medicine. This dosing allows a feeling of satisfaction about getting a boost to health without being inconvenienced by spending time planning and preparing nutritious meals", said one analyst.

Manufacturers have capitalized on this trend by making more superfruit products, and advertising these goods with healthy messaging, testimonials by individual users and, too often, exaggerated benefits.

As product innovations become more varied and imaginative, incorporating superfruits such

as açai or goji berries creates a widespread impact on the entire industry. Famed for having high levels of nutrients and antioxidants, superfruits have become a much-desired addition to consumers' diets.

"Consumers have responded enthusiastically to the idea that superfruits provide an enormous health boost," commented one author, "to the extent that the consumption of other fruits and vegetables may actually be reduced."

Is this a beneficial effect?

Physicians, food scientists and nutritionists would say "No"!

Though the popularity of superfruits and growing number of innovative products which feature them as ingredients gives consumers extra options in making their quota for nutrient intake, people must be aware that superfruit juices may not be a "quick-fix" solution for good nutrition.

In fact, many superfruit juices contain no nutrients.



Straight goji juice:
this or 1-3 servings of fresh fruit?

Question #2

What does science say about dietary antioxidants?

We'll list the facts in order, with the last statement being the conclusion.

1. Let's say the main reason consumers buy antioxidant superfruit juices is to enhance intake of antioxidant *phytochemicals*.

2. The first distinction we must make is that phytochemicals are still a scientifically undefined class of plant components concerning human physiology, with no guarantee they are really essential to human health.

3. This is in contrast to *essential nutrients* which science has proved are required for normal cellular and body functions. They are not synthesized within the human body so **must be obtained via the diet** (why they are called "essential").

Examples are the *vitamins A, C and E, each an antioxidant*.

4. *The following is a general statement about dietary antioxidants:*

Only vitamins A, C and E serving antioxidant roles can be obtained via our diet.

Does the superfruit juice you use contain any of them in appreciable amounts?

The marketing materials for most antioxidant superfruit juices emphasize the anthocyanins, flavonoids, xanthenes, tannins and proanthocyanidins -- all phytochemicals with antioxidant properties in a test tube, but not yet proved to have any effect in the body.

5. Actually, more evidence exists that **our bodies do not want most of these phytochemicals**, as **we actively metabolize or excrete about 97% of them within hours of consumption**, *click!*

It's possible that our bodies have sufficient amounts of antioxidants already, and that dietary intake of antioxidants - other than replenishing vitamins A, C and E - provides little in the way of antioxidant quota.



Cranberry juice - what's in it to benefit us?

Question #3

Why all the fuss just about antioxidants?

Shouldn't these "super" juices offer other nutrients of value to health?

It's true. **The antioxidant story sells**, even if it is only a theory that our health depends on dietary intake of some antioxidant phytochemicals.

And even if the antioxidant story is the only benefit offered in a juice. Why not essential nutrients?

But a superfruit blend containing the juices of 19 different fruits to maximize antioxidant value?

Wouldn't that be like taking 12 Aspirins when we know one will relieve the pain??

Let's keep in mind also that juices need to be double-pasteurized (subjected to very high heat, destroying bacteria, other micro-organisms, nutrients and phytochemicals) in the manufacturing of a superfruit juice. Once after the juice is first pressed from the berries, and again at the time of bottling.

Juices that retain or restore the fruit's natural nutrient levels may be the ones best described as "super".

Focus on that the next time you read a juice label !

Main Points of Townhall Meeting #1

- as consumers, we should demand a superfruit beverage that is more than just an antioxidant story -- we want actual nutrients from the superfruits!
- vitamins A, C and E are essential to humans -- see below for a list of foods providing them
- beyond these 3 antioxidant vitamins, there may be little actual health value of superfruit antioxidant phytochemicals in the human body
- the best science to date shows a) our bodies work hard to get rid of excessive antioxidants, eliminating 97% of consumed antioxidants within a few hours; and b) small amounts of dietary antioxidants -- like a small Aspirin dose for pain or a small volume needle for flu prevention -- may be all we need for antioxidant intake, possibly provided easily by eating 2-3 inexpensive fresh fruits per day

Getting your antioxidant vitamins from simple foods

- **Vitamin A:** carotenoids from yellow and orange plant foods, like carrots, whole corn, mango, apricots
- **Vitamin C:** navel orange, grapes and other berries, red bell pepper, kiwifruit
- **Vitamin E:** seeds, nuts, olives, seed oils

NEXT!

- we'll fine-tune our understanding of the antioxidant capacity of different foods
- consider again research showing the possible consequences of too much antioxidant intake
- have a closer look at the USDA's ORAC tables for fruits and other common foods



Contents of antioxidant phytochemicals and the principal nutrients of red grapes -- vitamin C, vitamin B6, manganese and prebiotic fiber -- are reduced by the mechanical pressing and heat of wine-making

Reading

Read this August 2008 Newsweek article about one of the most successful antioxidant superfruit juices ! *click*

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