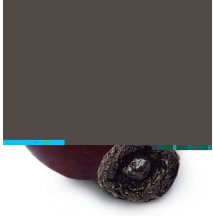


Prunes are Plum Full of Antioxidants That May Slow the Aging Process



Prunes are a good source of fiber and have long been recognized as a nutrient-rich fruit with multiple health benefits. But according to a recent study from Tufts University in Boston, prunes may also help slow the aging process in both the body and brain. The study ranked the antioxidant value of commonly eaten fruits and vegetables using an analysis called ORAC (Oxygen Radical Absorbency Capacity). Prunes topped the list with more than twice the antioxidant capacity as other high-scoring fruits such as blueberries and raisins. (See table at end for ORAC values of fruits and vegetables.)

ORAC is a test tube analysis that measures the total antioxidant power of foods and other chemical substances. Early findings suggest that this same antioxidant activity translates to animals, protecting cells and their components from oxidative damage.

The studies conducted at the U.S. Department of Agriculture Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University found that feeding middle-aged rats foods with plenty of antioxidants prevented some loss of long-term memory and learning ability.

"If these studies are borne out in further research, young and middle-aged people may be able to reduce risk of diseases of aging – including senility – simply by adding high (antioxidant) foods to their diets," said Floyd P. Horn, administrator of the USDA's Agricultural Research Service, in Beltsville, Md.

Antioxidants are special compounds that help protect cells from damage caused by free radicals. When healthy cells are damaged, they are more susceptible to aging, cardiovascular disease and certain types of cancers. Diets that contain fiber-rich foods such as fruits and vegetables, and are low in fat, saturated fat and cholesterol, are linked to a reduced risk of heart disease and certain cancers. Prunes, which are dried plums, are a good source of fiber and make an excellent choice.

The role of fruits and vegetables in health promotion and disease prevention may be related to compounds other than the vitamins, minerals and fiber found in these plant-based foods. In addition to well-known antioxidant vitamins A and C and beta-carotene, there are over 1,800 biologically active compounds that are not vitamins nor minerals that have been identified in foods. Research is just beginning to identify these compounds and describe their activity in the human body, however, many are believed to offer the protective benefits of antioxidants.

According to Dr. Prior, who is coordinating these studies at Tufts University, "If we can show some relationship between ORAC intake and health outcome in people, I think we may reach a point where the ORAC value will become a new standard for good antioxidant protection."

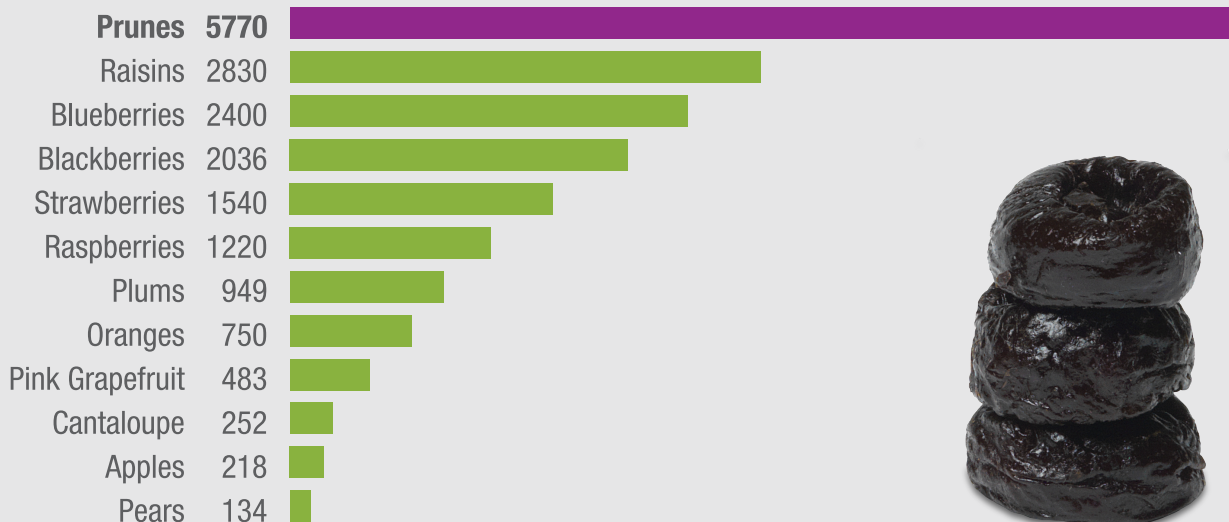
Top-scoring fruits and vegetables

Prunes Score Highest in Antioxidants



U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists at Tufts University have ranked fruits by their antioxidant levels. Many researchers believe antioxidants slow the aging process.

Fruit antioxidant score*



*Oxygen Radical Absorbance Capacity is a test tube analysis that measures the total antioxidant power of foods and other chemical substances, per 100 grams.

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture

ORAC units per 100 grams (about 3.5 ounces)

FRUITS

Prunes	5,770
Raisins	2,830
Blueberries	2,400
Blackberries	2,036
Strawberries	1,540
Raspberries	1,220
Plums	949
Oranges	750
Red grapes	739
Cherries	670
Kiwi fruit	602
Grapefruit, pink	483

VEGETABLES

Kale	1,770
Spinach	1,260
Brussels sprouts	980
Alfalfa sprouts	930
Broccoli Flowers	890
Beets	840
Red bell pepper	710
Onion	450
Corn	400
Eggplant	390

For more information:

- Can Foods Forestall Aging? Some with high antioxidant activity appear to aid memory. Agriculture Research/February 1999, www.ars.usda.gov/is/AR/archive/feb99/aging0299.htm
 - High ORAC Foods May Slow Aging, Agriculture Research Service, www.ars.usda.gov/is/pr/1999/990208.htm
 - Human Nutrition Requirements, Food Composition, and Intake, www.nps.ars.usda.gov/programs/107s2.htm
- Buy Dried Fruit and Prune Products Straight from the Processing Plant: Call 800-447-5218