



Source: <http://www.webmd.com/diet/news/20060627/mushrooms-full-of-antioxidants>

Mushrooms Full of Antioxidants

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WebMD Medical News

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June 27, 2006 -- Mushrooms have as many antioxidants as many vegetables, a new study shows.

Antioxidants help cells in the body ward off damage from dangerous oxygen molecules called free radicals. Free radicals may play a role in serious illnesses such as heart disease, cancer, and Alzheimer's disease.

Penn State researcher, N. Joy Dubost, PhD, measured antioxidant capacity in several kinds of mushrooms. They included the common white button mushroom (a brown variety of which is called the crimini mushroom, or, when larger, the portabella mushroom), shiitake mushrooms, and oyster mushrooms.

He found that white button mushrooms -- the ones you might put on a nice, lean steak -- have more antioxidant capacity than tomatoes, green peppers, pumpkins, zucchini, carrots, or green beans.

These common, inexpensive mushrooms also packed more antioxidant punch than the more exotic -- and more expensive -- shiitake and oyster mushrooms.

"You don't have to eat only the vegetables with the highest antioxidant capacity to benefit," Dubost says, in a news release. "If you eat a variety of mushrooms along with a variety of other vegetables, you'll be getting a variety of antioxidants."

Dubost presented his findings at this week's annual meeting of the Institute of Food Technologists in Orlando, Fla.

SOURCES: Dubost, N.J. and Beelman, R.B. Presentation, Institute of Food Technologists annual meeting, Orlando, Fla. News release, Penn State University.

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