

derived food might be protective against excess oxidant activity whilst retaining the required level of such activity for defence against infection.

Conclusion

Basic foods and condiments like herbs and spices are extensive sources of antioxidants. The benefits of antioxidants may depend on their variety and interactions. We know that we can optimise health by encouraging the consumption of a wide variety of nutritious foods, but we cannot, so far, be sure about the risks and benefits of taking antioxidant supplements.

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Self-test questions

The following statements are either true or false (answers on page 151)

- Naturally-occurring antioxidants have no adverse effects.
- A beneficial effect of an antioxidant found in food may not occur if the antioxidant is taken as a supplement.

Dental implications

Prepared by Associate Professor R.G. Woods of the Australian Dental Association

Digoxin in the 21st century (page 136)

The cardiac glycoside digoxin is taken by an increasing number of dental patients. The drugs used in dental treatment which may interact with digoxin include tetracyclines, erythromycin, catecholamines in local anaesthetic preparations (which may increase the risk of arrhythmia) and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as diclofenac.

It is prudent to use an alternative to adrenaline or other catecholamine vasoconstrictors in local anaesthetics. Alternative vasoconstrictors available in dental preparations include felypressin with prilocaine hydrochloride.

Notwithstanding this comment, clinically there appears to be no reaction to up to 4 mL of local anaesthetics containing adrenaline in the low concentration of 1:200 000 (5 microgram/mL). Extra care should be taken to avoid intravascular injection.

Treatments should be carefully planned. Consultation with the patient's medical practitioner may be necessary. Appointments for patients taking digoxin should be kept as brief as practicable. If extensive treatment is planned it is often prudent to monitor the patient with an electrocardiograph and oximetry. Sometimes oxygen may be needed, so it should be available in the surgery.