



## Role of Vitamins and their Antioxidant Properties

Guiling Li\*

Department of Ocean Food and Biological Engineering, Jimei University, Xiamen, China

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### About the Study

Vitamins are essential micronutrients required for various physiological processes in the human body. Apart from their well-known role in metabolism, growth, and development, vitamins also play a crucial role as antioxidants. Antioxidants are compounds that protect cells from damage caused by harmful free radicals and oxidative stress.

#### Oxidative stress

To appreciate the role of vitamins as antioxidants, it is essential to understand the concept of oxidative stress. Oxidative stress occurs when there is an imbalance between the production of free radicals and the body's antioxidant defenses. Free radicals are highly reactive molecules that can damage DNA, proteins, and lipids, leading to various diseases, including cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and neurodegenerative disorders.

#### Vitamin C as an antioxidant

It is, also known as ascorbic acid, is a powerful antioxidant that plays a vital role in neutralizing free radicals. It donates electrons to unstable free radicals, thereby stabilizing them and preventing them from causing cellular damage. Moreover, vitamin C regenerates other antioxidants such as vitamin E, enhancing their antioxidant capacity. Additionally, vitamin C protects against oxidative damage by preserving the integrity of cellular membranes and stimulating the production of collagen, a structural protein.

#### Vitamin E as an antioxidant

It encompasses a group of compounds known as tocopherols and tocotrienols, with alpha-tocopherol being the most biologically active form. Vitamin E acts as a lipid-soluble antioxidant, protecting cell membranes from oxidative damage. It scavenges lipid peroxyl and

alkoxyl radicals, interrupting the chain reaction of lipid oxidation. Vitamin E also enhances the stability of cell membranes and prevents the oxidation of low-density lipoproteins (LDL), thereby reducing the risk of cardiovascular diseases.

#### Beta-Carotene (Provitamin A) as an antioxidant

It is a precursor of vitamin A and exhibits potent antioxidant activity. As a carotenoid, it functions by quenching singlet oxygen and scavenging free radicals, thus protecting against oxidative stress. Additionally, beta-carotene works synergistically with other antioxidants to enhance their effectiveness. Furthermore, beta-carotene plays a vital role in maintaining healthy vision and supporting immune function.

#### Other vitamins with antioxidant properties

Although vitamin C, vitamin E, and beta-carotene are prominent antioxidants, several other vitamins also possess antioxidant properties. These include vitamin A, vitamin D, vitamin B2 (riboflavin), vitamin B3 (niacin), and vitamin B5 (pantothenic acid). Each of these vitamins contributes to the overall antioxidant defense system in the body, either by directly neutralizing free radicals or by supporting the regeneration of other antioxidants.

Vitamins play a crucial role as antioxidants in the body's defense against oxidative stress and the damage caused by free radicals. Vitamin C, vitamin E, and beta-carotene, among other vitamins, have been extensively studied for their antioxidant properties. These vitamins function by donating electrons to unstable free radicals, neutralizing them and preventing cellular damage. By understanding the role of vitamins as antioxidants, emphasis should be given on the importance of a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and in our daily life based on their uses.

### **Vitamin B as an antioxidant**

Additionally, vitamin B3 (niacin) and its derivative nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide (NAD) also play a role in the body's antioxidant defense mechanisms. NAD is involved in cellular energy production and helps maintain the balance between oxidative stress and antioxidant activity.

While the B vitamins mentioned above have indirect antioxidant effects, they are not typically referred to as primary antioxidants. Vitamins A, C, and E, along with other compounds like selenium and certain phytochemicals, are generally considered more potent antioxidants. These primary antioxidants help neutralize free radicals, which are unstable molecules that can damage cells and contribute to various health problems.