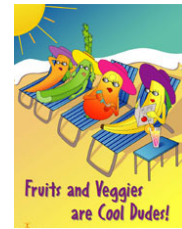


## What's an ORAC?

For years now, the media has been consistently educating us about the need to supplement our diets with more vitamins, minerals, and especially ANTIOXIDANTS. So it's safe to assume that nowadays many people are aware of what antioxidants are, and are aware of what the benefits are of having *more of them* in our diets.



Recently what is becoming more prevalent is talk of the ORAC scores of antioxidants, foods with anti oxidative properties and supplements. The ORAC (Oxygen Radical Absorbance Capacity) unit, ORAC value, or "ORAC score" is a method of measuring the antioxidant capacity of different foods and supplements. Scientists believe that foods higher on the ORAC scale are more readily absorbed and will more effectively neutralize free radicals. Does that mean that taking a supplement with a higher ORAC score or eating foods that have a higher ORAC score requires eating or ingesting *less of it and experience the benefits much quicker?*



From inception of this procedure, some information points to it being first developed by US scientists at the National Institute of Aging in the National Institutes of Health in Maryland. Other reports indicate that the USDA Human Nutrition Research Centre first developed the method for measuring ORAC scores of foods and supplements in 1992.

So, maybe it's not important to know who actually developed the method to measure the ORAC of substances. What you should know is that this procedure is increasingly being used in manufacturing facilities' labs and ORAC scores in nutritional supplements are being used by manufacturers to gain consumers' attention in marketing their products. The question is can this information be trusted? Should we let this information carry more weight in our buying decisions? Does it make more sense to choose to eat more blueberries over strawberries because the former has a higher ORAC value? Should we take supplement "X" over "Y" because of its ORAC score?



Currently, there isn't an industry standard by which the ORAC measuring procedure must comply with for determining the oxygen radical absorbance capacity (ORAC) scores of foods and supplements. Factors that effect results are: 1) the growing conditions of fruits and vegetables can yield different ORAC values; 2) cooking or freezing foods can affect an ORAC score; and 3) its absorption capacity, which is the ultimate goal — can effectively nullify an ORAC score.



Red wine is a rich source of biologically active phytochemicals. Particular compounds called polyphenols found in red wine such as catechins and resveratrol are thought to have anti oxidant or anti cancer properties.

So it may be difficult to know exactly how nutritional supplements are processed and know how foods were grown. ORAC scores touted by manufacturers and suppliers in their marketing ads will make them sound really good, and better than their competitors. But does that make those products more effective, and better for us?

No single antioxidant protects all body systems. Each has its own protective properties for specific body parts or functions. Look for products that combine two or more of the vital nutrients listed above. Not only will you reap more benefits by taking a variety of antioxidants in one supplement, but it's also more convenient than taking several different products separately.

The Canada Food Guide's recommended daily allowance of fruits and veggies is between 7 – 10 servings for adults. Some of the best sources for antioxidants are from phytonutrients (plant chemicals) found in plants foods and not just from supplements. Dark leafy greens and brightly coloured plant foods have higher ORAC scores.

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