



# HEALTH TALK

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## Why Monitor A Problem If You Don't Fix It?

Have you seen the commercial about the dentist who's only a "dental monitor"? In other words, he only finds the problem and tells you about it; he doesn't fix it. (If you haven't seen it, you can watch it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CGDzxPsd7w>). Seems kind of silly when we put it that way, but if you're still of the mindset to "just watch" a dental problem, you're doing the same thing.

In the past, we, as dentists, were taught to "just watch" small areas of decay on teeth and other early problems. I think in part we did this because the fillings available at the time required dentists to remove a significant amount of tooth structure to place the filling—so we waited until the area of decay penetrated the tooth enamel before we drilled.

Today, we have products that will bond to the tooth enamel—allowing us to fill a tooth

all while removing much less tooth structure than we had to in the past. With this technology, the days of "just watching" a small cavity are past!

Remember the problem won't cure itself, it's only going to keep getting worse. It won't get less expensive to fix by waiting—and in many cases it may get more expensive to do so and/or require additional dental services to fix it. And it won't get more comfortable if you wait.

(Note: There are a few isolated cases where Watching is indicated. For example, if you have a soft tissue sore, we might watch it for two weeks to see if it heals on its own. So, if you've burned the roof of your mouth with hot pizza, as long as you don't keep traumatizing the area, it should heal itself within two weeks as part of the normal healing process. But if the area doesn't heal, we then need to address it without waiting.)

\*Note: The information in this article is not meant to replace the clinical judgment of your



healthcare providers.

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## Foods with ample antioxidants

The term "antioxidants" is frequently associated with cancer prevention. Antioxidants are helpful, but many people may not fully comprehend the role antioxidants play in fighting cancer.

Antioxidants are chemicals that interact with and neutralize free radicals, thus preventing them from causing damage, offers the National Cancer Institute. Free radicals are formed in the body by exposure to ionizing radiation and other radiation. An excessive amount of free radicals in the body can negatively affect cells and potentially lead to the formation of various types of cancer and other diseases.

While the body makes some of the antioxidants it uses to scavenge free radicals and render them ineffective, it also relies on antioxidants from food sources.

The Dana-Farber Cancer Institute says that, to date, nine randomized controlled clinical trials of dietary antioxidant supplements for cancer prevention have been conducted worldwide. Some studies have pointed to the benefits of antioxidant supplements, while others found that these supplements can actually elevate cancer risk or diminish the efficacy of cancer treatments. Increasing antioxidant

intake may be best accomplished by eating a variety of plant-based foods that contain high levels of naturally occurring antioxidants, rather than through supplementation.

So what foods offer the highest levels of potentially cancer-fighting antioxidants? The largest and most comprehensive study to date into antioxidant levels was published in 2004 in the Journal of Agriculture and Food Chemistry by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Researchers analyzed antioxidant levels in more than 100 foods. In addition to pointing out many foods people already knew to be antioxidant-rich, researchers uncovered some surprises.

Here's a look at some of the best bets for beneficial foods that may be part of a cancer-fighting diet.

- small red bean (dried)
- wild blueberry
- red kidney bean (dried)
- pinto bean
- cultivated blueberry
- cranberry
- cooked artichoke
- blackberry
- prune
- raspberry

These foods rank high among those with the most antioxidants per serving, according to the USDA. However, many other foods also are great sources of antioxidants. These include russet potatoes, pecans, gala apples, walnuts, Indian gooseberries, cloves, and mint.

Eating a variety of fruits and vegetables, particularly berries, can provide many of the antioxidants the human body needs to neutralize the potential damage caused by free radicals.



## 3 signs of sun-damaged skin

The summer sun beckons many people outdoors. Soaking up some rays on a warm summer day can be a great way to unwind and get a little color.

It's not always easy to recognize signs of sun damage when spending time outdoors in the summer, especially for people who lay out in the sun hoping to get a tan. Such damage may be overlooked or more evident in the fall, when people begin spending more time indoors. But sun-damaged skin should not be taken lightly. In fact, the Skin Cancer Foundation notes that the vast majority of melanomas, the most dangerous form of skin cancer, are caused by the sun. The SCF even notes that one study from researchers in the United Kingdom found that 86 percent of melanomas can be attributed to exposure to the ultraviolet, or UV, radiation from the sun.

Sun-damaged skin will not necessarily lead to skin cancer. However, the American Academy of Dermatology notes that sun damage can lead to skin cancer. Going outdoors without adequate protection makes skin vulnerable to sun-related damage. Learning to recognize three of the more common types of sun damage may compel people visit their physicians and take potentially life-saving steps to prevent future damage.

### 1. Wrinkles

Wrinkles aren't always a by-product of aging. While the Mayo Clinic notes that skin becomes less elastic and more fragile as it ages, increasing the likelihood that wrin-



gles will develop, wrinkles also can indicate sun-damaged skin.

### 2. Age spots

According to the AAD, age spots, which are flat brown, gray or black spots on the skin, appear on areas of the body that are most often exposed to the sun, including the face and hands. The AAD notes that what looks like an age spot could actually be skin cancer. If any such spots are detected, men and women should see a board-certified dermatologist for a through skin exam.

### 3. Loose skin

Loose skin is sometimes a by-product of aging, but it also can be indicative of sun damage. Various products claim to treat loose skin, but the AAD notes that facelift-like results likely won't come from any product sold in a jar. For example, the AAD says results from skin-firming creams will be subtle at best. Products that contain a retinoid like retinol, which can help the body make more collagen, might produce minor results.

Sun-related skin damage can affect peoples' appearance and even suggest the presence of something more serious, such as skin cancer. Learn more by visiting the American Academy of Dermatology at [www.aad.org](http://www.aad.org).

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