

Antioxidant properties of açai

In recent years, açai berries and açai juice have gained considerable interest among consumers as a potential panacea, with dietary supplement companies claiming the fruit promotes weight loss, increases energy levels, lowers cholesterol, and protects against cancer. Research supporting these health claims are, however, extremely limited. The few studies that have been conducted thus far have investigated the antioxidant properties of açai in the laboratory setting. While these types of studies provide insight about the chemical properties of the fruit, they do not address any of its touted health claims.

Two recent studies give somewhat conflicting results about the antioxidant properties of açai. The first study (1) used several different laboratory methods to measure the antioxidant potential of freeze-dried açai. The researchers found it to score higher on one assay than all other reported foods, but the result was not consistent across the different methods used. A second study (2) also used a variety of methods to measure the antioxidant properties of açai juice, and found it to score lower than pomegranate, grape, blueberry, and black cherry juices and red wine, but higher than cranberry, orange, and apple juices.

Together, these studies suggest that açai fruit and its juice have antioxidant properties in the laboratory setting, but more research is needed to answer questions about its potential health benefits.

Adapted from:

1. Schauss AG, Wu X, Prior RL, Ou B, Huang D, Owens J, Agarwal A, Jensen GS, Hart AN, Shanbrom E. Antioxidant capacity and other bioactivities of the freeze-dried Amazonian palm berry, *Euterpe oleraceae* Mart. (Acai). *J Agric Food Chem* 2006;54(22):8604-10.
2. Seeram NP, Aviram M, Zhang Y, Henning SM, Feng L, Dreher M, Heber D. Comparison of antioxidant potency of commonly consumed polyphenol-rich beverages in the United States. *J Agric Food Chem* 2008;56(4):1415-22.