Introduction

WHAT IS A FREE RADICAL?

It is difficult these days to open a medical Journal without seeing a paper on the role of reactive oxygen species or free radicals in human disease. These species have been implicated in over 100 conditions from arthritis and haemorrhagic shock to AIDS ***(Risberg et al., 1991)***.

This wide range of disease implies that free radicals are not something esoteric but that their increased formation accompanies tissue injury in most, if not all, human diseases. Sometimes they make a significant contribution to the disease pathology ***(Reilly et al., 1991)***. It is valuable to learn about these species and learn about compounds or enzymes that might block, inhibit or prevent radical initiated reactions ***(Norman, 1992)***. These compounds protect the biological systems against the potentially harmful effects or reactions that can cause excessive oxidations ***(Faintuch et al., 1995)***.