Vitamin C

WHAT IS IT?

Vitamin C, also known as ascorbic acid is a powerful antioxidant that helps protect our cells from damage and plays an important role in the immune system's ability to fight off infections. Vitamin C is necessary for the making of collagen, needed for the healing of wounds and for healthy joints. Humans can't make their own vitamin C, so it must be obtained in the diet.

Vitamin C is found in many fruits and vegetables. Cooking can decrease the vitamin C content of food.

WHO MIGHT CONSIDER TAKING THIS?

When severe, vitamin C deficiency results in scurvy. This potentially fatal disease is found only in those with severely restricted diets. Most Americans are not deficient in vitamin C, but some people might have trouble getting enough in their diet, particularly those with chronic illness, inflammatory disease, chronic diarrhea, diabetes, smokers, and the elderly.

There is some evidence that vitamin C improves the symptoms of a cold if taken early. Vitamin C also may reduce high cholesterol and high blood pressure levels. Vitamin C can reduce certain pain syndromes and may reduce constipation.

PREPARATIONS AND DOSAGE

Adequate vitamin C can be obtained by eating the recommended 5–7 servings of vegetables and fruits daily. The RDA varies with age, sex, and pregnancy, from 40–120mg/day. Many experts believe that for optimal health this should be closer to 250 mg per day, while the typical dosages used in many studies are 500–1000mg per day. While certain conditions may benefit from very high doses of vitamin C, even delivered intravenously, this requires oversight by a health care provider.

Supplements usually contain vitamin C in the form of ascorbic acid, which is equivalent to naturally occurring ascorbic acid found in foods.

CONCERNS?

There are very few concerns with taking vitamin C as a supplement, except possibly increased kidney stones in those patients already at risk. The most common side effects reported by people taking large doses of vitamin C are stomach upset and diarrhea. Both of these can be successfully prevented by choosing a "Buffered" form of ascorbic acid that is treated to have a neutral pH that is less harsh on the stomach.

Notes:

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