Vitamin E

WHAT IS IT?

Vitamin E is a mixture of 8 different natural chemicals, called tocopherols and tocotrienols, that have multiple protective functions in the body. Its primary function is as an antioxidant, which protects the body against the damaging effects of free radicals and reactive oxygen produced in the process of normal metabolism. Vitamin E works in conjunction with many other vitamin and minerals, particularly selenium, copper, and zinc.

WHO MIGHT CONSIDER TAKING THIS?

Vitamin E is found in many foods, including wheat germ, grains, sunflower seeds and oil, safflower oil, almonds, tofu, spinach, avocados, and broccoli. Severe deficiency of vitamin E is rare in the US, but many people are not getting enough in their diet.

Although research data in many clinical areas is mixed, your health care provider might recommend vitamin E supplements.

Vitamin E has been extensively studied and seems to be very effective for fatty liver, and may also be helpful for decreasing the risk of heart disease and dementia.

PREPARATIONS AND DOSAGE

The Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA) for vitamin E is 22.5 IU of alpha-tocopherol. There is rationale for higher doses of supplemental vitamin E for certain health conditions—speak with your health care provider before taking higher amounts of vitamin E. It is best to use a supplement that contains a mixture of all the components of vitamin E—including both tocopherols and tocotrienols or even just tocotrienols. These may be more difficult to find and require careful label reading.

CONCERNS?

Adverse effects: One major concern with vitamin E is increased risk of bleeding when taken with blood thinners, such as warfarin or aspirin. It also interacts with several medications as well, so discuss with a doctor or pharmacist if you are taking other medications.

A main concern about vitamin E supplements is whether people who take them have increased mortality, or rates of death. For this reason, stick with healthy foods containing vitamin E rather than concentrated supplements, unless recommended by your physician. It is recommended that persons with prostate cancer do not take vitamin E supplements.

Notes:

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