

Vitamin C: Guarding Your Immunity & Life

DID YOU KNOW?

Vitamin C's health-boosting benefits go far beyond fighting the common cold and flu. . . . [T]his potent antioxidant is crucial in supporting the health of the cardiovascular system, kidneys, bones, respiratory system, and more.

~Life Extension Magazine, Laurie Barclay, M.D., "High Dose Vitamin C - A New Therapeutic Approach"

Do not let either the medical authorities or the politicians mislead you. Find out what the facts are, and make your own decisions about how to lead a happy life and how to work for a better world. ~ Linus Pauling, Ph.D., Leading Vitamin C Researcher

What makes you nervous? Aging poorly, without quality of life? Living a shorter life than you expected because you don't know how to protect yourself? Learning about the importance of Vitamin C to boosting your immune system, and incorporating this affordable nutrient into your diet, could calm your fears.

What Is The Immune System?

Experts often speak of the "immune system," but how many truly understand just what it is and why it is important to maintain it? The very complex immune system, which plays a direct role in allergies and infectious and autoimmune diseases, is a collection of organs, cells, and tissues that work together to protect the body from disease caused mostly by bacteria, viruses, parasites, and fungi (e.g., yeast).¹ The tonsils, lymph nodes, appendix, spleen, thymus gland (a small, butterfly-shaped organ between the breastplate and heart), and bone marrow, are some critical components of this system.² T-cells (immune system managers), B cells, natural killer cells, and macrophages, are some of the immunity cells that guard the body from foreign invaders.

The immune system's strength is critical to disease prevention. Its breakdown results in the development of everything from colds and the flu to heart disease and cancer. According to Thomas Levy, M.D., J.D., Vitamin C (also known as L-ascorbic acid) can stimulate the immune system's natural antimicrobial and antitoxic properties.³

The Conventional Approach

The federal government unfortunately only recommends 75 mg/day of Vitamin C for adult women, and 90 mg/day for adult men.⁴ Research proves that adults actually require much higher doses to realize the vast array of health benefits that Vitamin C offers. In fact, the "recommended dietary allowance" is only enough to prevent vitamin-deficiency disease states such as scurvy and is thus not nearly enough to support optimal health. Laurie Barclay, M.D., considers it imperative that young children, especially, receive appropriate Vitamin C supplementation to strengthen their resistance to infectious organisms.⁵

Vitamin C Research

Vitamin C is necessary to the body's creation of certain neurotransmitters, collagen (an essential component of connective tissue), and L-carnitine (an amino acid that supplies energy to immune cells), and is involved in protein metabolism. Nutrition research has further demonstrated that Vitamin C is an important water-soluble nutrient that suppresses oxidative stress in order to protect proteins and fats from free radical damage. This process increases the life span of immune cells, reduces infection-related cellular damage, and may also help to prevent the onset of infections.⁶

Frederick Klenner, M.D., F.C.C.P., an early Vitamin C researcher, emphasized that physicians must recognize the many factors that increase the body's demand for ascorbic acid, including:

(1) aging; (2) poor habits/lifestyle (e.g., smoking, alcohol use); (3) inadequate/artificially induced sleep; (3) trauma (e.g., from pathogens, work, accidents, surgery); (4) weak kidneys; (5) toxic environment (including pesticide exposure); (6) drugs; (7) season of the year; (8) low absorption, loss, and inadequate intake of nutrients; and (10) overweight/obesity.⁷

According to Thomas Levy, M.D., J.D., over 70 years of clinical research has established these numerous

life-enhancing and life-extending benefits of high-dose Vitamin C: (1) has cured acute hepatitis; (2) has rapidly cured mononucleosis, West Nile virus, and Dengue fever; (3) “exerts anticancer activity” and is a highly effective cancer therapy (provides “effective cancer chemotherapy,” especially when administered intravenously); (4) protects against atherosclerosis and heart disease mortality; and (5) guards against the development of diabetes.⁸ Some clinical research has also proven this vitamin’s ability to reduce the incidence and shorten the duration of colds, especially when combined with zinc gluconate.

Dr. Levy has commented on allopathic doctors’ obligation to treat patients with ascorbic acid: “any physician . . . claiming that Vitamin C is experimental, unapproved, and/or posing unwarranted risks . . . is really only demonstrating a complete . . . ignorance and/or denial of the scientific literature, and a serious question as to what the real motivations might be in the withholding of such therapy then arises. . . . [I]gnorance of medical fact is ultimately no sound defense for a doctor withholding valid treatment, especially when that information can be easily accessed.”⁹

Safety, Sources, Types & Doses

Raw fruits and vegetables are the best food sources of Vitamin C, including red/green peppers, broccoli, strawberries, citrus fruits, and Brussels sprouts.¹⁰ Contrary to general public belief, fruit juices are **not** a good source in that they provide less Vitamin C than pure sugar, which directly undermines immunity.

As for Vitamin C supplements, there is no known toxic dosage in patients without preexisting kidney disease. Also, the intake of high doses does not increase the risk of calcium oxalate kidney stones, but actually lowers kidney stone occurrence.¹¹

With respect to the acidity (relatively weak) of ascorbic acid, Orthomolecular.org (of whose editorial review board Dr. Levy is a member with nine other experts) offers this information: (1) since ordinary chewables can etch the teeth, buffered chewable Vitamin C or tablets/capsules are recommended; (2) mega doses of Vitamin C (e.g., 1,000-3,000 mg every 20 minutes) can cause heartburn, and lower, excessive doses (beyond “bowel tolerance”) can cause loose stools or diarrhea; (3) those with sensitive digestive systems should use buffered ascorbate. It is somewhat controversial whether Ester-C[®] calcium ascorbate (a patented, buffered/pH-neutral, fat-soluble form of Vitamin C) is superior to ordinary ascorbic acid. However, Ester-C[®] has been clinically shown to enter cells faster and retain its potency longer than other forms of Vitamin C.

Appropriate Vitamin C dosing depends on the reason it is ingested. An adult daily maintenance dose can range from 500 – 3,000 mg. More can be taken to bowel tolerance (or intravenously) when the immune system is under fire. Ascorbic acid should be taken in divided doses throughout the day so that it remains in the system. Given its natural antihistamine effect, a patient suffering from nasal congestion should not take it in high doses.

Conclusion

With proper guidance from an experienced holistic practitioner, nutritional supplements such as Vitamin C, diet, and healthy lifestyle changes, can together enhance and extend life. It is critical not only to take the right supplements, but also the right doses, in the right way, for an adequate time period.

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¹ <http://hepatitis.about.com/od/ghi/g/ImmuneSystem.htm>

² <http://hepatitis.about.com/od/ghi/g/ImmuneSystem.htm>

³ Powerpoint presentation “Vitamin C - The Facts, The Fiction and the Law”, slide 4

⁴ <http://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/VitaminC-HealthProfessional/>

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http://www.lef.org/magazine/mag2006/oct2006_report_vitaminc_01.htm?source=search&key=vitamin%20c

⁶ http://www.lef.org/magazine/mag2006/oct2006_report_vitaminc_01.htm?source=search&key=vitamin%20c

⁷ http://www.seanet.com/~alexs/ascorbate/197x/klenner-fr-j_appl_nutr-1971-v23-n3&4-p61.htm

(Observations On the Dose and Administration of Ascorbic Acid When Employed Beyond the Range of A Vitamin In Human Pathology, Frederick R. Klenner, M.D., F.C.C.P.[J.A.N.]

⁸ Powerpoint presentation “Vitamin C - The Facts, The Fiction and the Law”, slide ___

⁹ Powerpoint presentation “Vitamin C - The Facts, The Fiction and the Law”, slide ___

¹⁰ <http://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/VitaminC-HealthProfessional/>

¹¹ Powerpoint presentation “Vitamin C - The Facts, The Fiction and the Law”, slide ___