

[IMAGE]

The Benefits of Vitamin C

By Julie T. Chen, MD

Vitamin C is important in many functions in our body. It helps with wound healing, support of our immune system, and our cardiovascular system, just to name a few of its jobs in our body. It has the effect of helping our mood, helping us heal, helping us with skin health, supporting our immune cells and function, improving healing after trauma or infection, and helps with those who need added health support like those combating cancers. So, how much should we be taking of vitamin C and where should we get it from?

For those of us who eat a wide variety of vegetables and fruits and nuts and whole grains, vitamin C is likely to be abundant in our diet. If you are not eating a lot of these foods...why not? The fact is that you should be. Second of all, if you are not getting it in your foods, you can supplement with a vitamin tablet but please be aware that our body always does better when we get our nutrients from our foods.

In general, I use supplements as a gap-filler. The foundation of a healthy well-balanced diet is the most important. For many of us, we may still need supplements to fill the gaps of what we are not absorbing from our foods, but the supplements should be used as such...a gap filler and not as a major food group.

So, eat a medley of fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts and whole grains and then if you have many of the health issues I mentioned above, you may want to consider supplementing Vitamin C at 500-1000mg/day. If you need a higher dosage for a specific health reason, please check with your doctor first before taking it to make sure the dosing is appropriate for you.

There is one caveat I want you to pay attention to in regards to consuming foods rich in vitamin C. A lot of my patients in my clinic of integrative medicine in San Jose CA try to get their vitamin C and other vitamins through only fruit juices. You should be aware that fruit juices typically are high in sugars. If that is the only way you are getting your vitamins, you need to make sure that you have your blood sugar level checked by your doctor as well as your triglycerides to make sure that you are not overdoing it. If your blood sugar or triglycerides are elevating, you need to cut back on your fruit and fruit juice intake and try to get most of your vitamin C through vegetables such as broccoli and red peppers, just to name two options.

Ultimately, I always tell my patients that if you could just eat a lot of different colored vegetables at every meal, you'll be able to take the guess work out of getting your necessary vitamins and minerals. By eating this way, you'll be able to naturally consume many of the vitamins and minerals Mother Nature intended for us to have to keep our body running optimally.

Dr. Julie T. Chen is board-certified in internal medicine and fellowship-trained and board-certified in integrative medicine. She has her own medical practice in San Jose, Calif. She is the medical director of corporation wellness at several Silicon Valley-based corporations, is on several medical expert panels of Web sites and nonprofit organizations, is a recurring monthly columnist for several national magazines, and has been featured in radio, newspaper, and magazine interviews. She incorporates various healing modalities into her practice including, but is not limited to, medical acupuncture, Chinese scalp acupuncture, clinical hypnotherapy, strain-counterstrain osteopathic manipulations, and biofeedback. To learn more, visit www.makinghealthyez.com.

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