

Fun Facts About Vitamin C

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VITAMIN C is the most popular of vitamins and yet it is often the most misunderstood. Here, we hope to clear the air about this vitamin. So get enlightened about the real benefits and true side of this highly indispensable antioxidant. Here are some facts about Vitamin C:

* Eskimos almost never contracted scurvy because they ate their meat raw: In a very revealing study conducted on vitamin C, scientists found that Eskimos almost never contracted scurvy. How fascinating. Eskimos also hardly ate vegetables - which contain high amounts of vitamin C. However they did eat lots of meat, raw meat. The study led to some very important findings. One, that meat contains high amounts of vitamin C. And two, that its nutritionally high vitamin C content was often compromised and destroyed by the cooking process.

* Cooking and storing fruit and vegetables for too long causes vitamin C loss: To preserve vitamin C content, cook rapidly with very little water and serve immediately. Steaming and microwaving minimises loss of vitamin C. Canned fruit and vegetables may lose some of their vitamin C value. However, frozen fruit and vegetables keep more vitamin C goodness. So, to best protect vitamin C content, keep all your fruit and vegetables chilled until they are used.

* A long time ago seamen were called limeys because they ate lots of citrus fruit: Around the 1700s, any seafarer knew that the chances of them returning alive wasn't high. This wasn't because he might be killed by pirates or a deadly storm, but because he might contract the dreaded scurvy.

Due to lack of vitamin C during long voyages (fresh vegetables and fruit were scarce because of their short shelf-life), almost two-thirds of a ship's crew might die of scurvy during a long voyage. In 1947 though, the tide turned for seamen. Dr James Lind devised an experiment to see what substance would keep seamen healthy. He discovered that giving them limes cured scurvy in a very short time. This meant a safer and happier ending for all the limeys!

* Vitamin C works like the super-glue in keeping cells together: Vitamin C helps to produce collagen. When you are wounded, collagen glues the separated tissue faces together. Cells are held together by collagen. Collagen is also the basis on which bone is formed. So if you break a bone or get a scrape, vitamin C goes straight into action, helping you to heal properly.

Vitamin C is important for a whole lot of other reasons besides collagen production. As an antioxidant, it acts as our bodyguard against oxidation. It also promotes the absorption of iron by our bodies and is needed to regulate our metabolic rate. The foods you eat get metabolised (burned up) and used as fuel for energy and to repair damage

from injury and disease. This is why people with infections or colds need higher doses of vitamin C to heal faster. Whilst those suffering from extensive burns need extra vitamin C to form greater amounts of scar tissues.

The two earliest signs of vitamin C deficiency are bleeding gums and broken capillaries.

In later stages, the skin becomes rough, brown, scaly and dry. Wounds fail to heal. Teeth loosen and fractures in the bone occur.

* Kiwis are twice as rich in vitamin C than oranges: Contrary to popular belief that oranges contain the best vitamin C content, it's actually kiwis and papayas which contain the most of this all- important nutrient.

* Vitamin C is used as a food preservative and photographic developing agent: Vitamin C is commonly added to foods as an antioxidant to protect colour and aroma.

It is also an alkaline solution that can be used as a photographic developing agent.

Most animals can produce their own vitamin C with the exception of fish, primates (including humans) and guinea pigs!

Linus Pauling recommended taking mega doses of vitamin C to ward off colds. According to the famous scientist and champion of vitamin C, humans have lost the ability to manufacture this vitamin due to their nutritionally-lacking diet. He recommended that we take far above the recommended 60mg a day.

Because vitamin C is water-soluble, it needs to be replenished often. Water-soluble vitamins travel quickly through your bloodstream. And whatever your body doesn't utilise tends to come right out when you urinate. Since vitamin C doesn't hang around long in our bodies therefore, it needs to be replaced often, either through food sources or supplementation. - Article courtesy of Merck

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