

On nutrition: Vitamin C revisited

March 11 2022, by Barbara Intermill



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Experts at the Linus Pauling Institute sponsored an extremely interesting presentation of vitamin C this week. You may remember Dr. Pauling, a brilliant and sometimes controversial chemist who published numerous books and articles on the role of vitamin C and other nutrients in human health. The institute at Oregon State University that bears his name

continues to carry out this type of research.

The webinar opened my eyes to a whole new area of investigation, however. Instead of discussing vitamin C and the common cold, researchers Dr. Jeanne Drisko and Qi Chen, Ph.D., from the University of Kansas are now studying the use of vitamin C infusions to treat certain diseases, including cancer.

As wild as it may sound, these experts are finding evidence that giving large doses of vitamin C intravenously (into the veins) makes the vitamin work as a drug, not a nutrient. This approach, though still in its infancy, is showing some encouraging results in the treatment of some health conditions. Stay tuned as we learn more about this from larger clinical trials.

Vitamin C is still extremely important as a nutrient, however. So much so that I gleaned this information from this Institute's 100 Questions about Vitamin C:

Do we get enough vitamin C in our diets to keep our immune system healthy?

Maybe not. The [experts](#) recommend a daily multivitamin [supplement](#) that contains vitamin C in addition to a diet high in fruits and vegetables, especially those rich in vitamin C such as kiwi, [citrus fruit](#) and bell peppers.

Is it better to take natural or synthetic forms of vitamin C?

Both forms are chemically the same and our bodies do not distinguish any difference between them. Claims that "natural vitamin C" is better are not supported by science.

In addition, vitamin C supplements are better absorbed if taken in smaller doses. Two-hundred milligrams is absorbed better than 500 milligrams, for example. And don't waste your money on sustained release vitamin C supplements. They appear to be less absorbed than other forms.

How do we find the best brand of supplements?

Good question, since vitamin manufacturers are not required to prove their products contain the exact amount of ingredients listed on the label. Look for products that display "NSF" or "USP" logos. These have been tested for potency and purity.

What about vitamin C supplements and kidney stones?

If you have a history of calcium oxalate [kidney stones](#), vitamin C supplements may not be a good idea. And especially don't exceed 500 milligrams of supplemental [vitamin C](#) per day.

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