

Vitamin C therapy questioned

In massive doses, vitamin C (ascorbic acid) stops a cold within hours, stops influenza in a day or two, and stops viral pneumonia (pain, fever, cough) in two or three days. It is a highly effective antihistamine, antiviral and antitoxin. It reduces inflammation and lowers fever. Administered intravenously, ascorbate kills cancer cells without harming healthy tissue.

Many people therefore wonder, in the face of statements like these, why the medical professions have not embraced vitamin C therapy with open and grateful arms.

Probably the main roadblock to widespread examination and utilization of this all-too-simple therapy is the equally widespread belief that there *must* be unknown dangers to tens of thousands of milligrams of ascorbic acid. Yet, since the time mega-ascorbate therapy was introduced in the late 1940's by Fred R. Klenner, M.D., there has been an especially safe and extremely effective track record to follow.

Still, for some, questions remain. Here is a sample of what readers have asked OMNS about vitamin C:

Is 2,000 mg/day of vitamin C a mega dose?

No. Decades ago, Linus Pauling and Irwin Stone showed that most animals make at least that much (or more) per human body weight per day.

Why has the government set the "Safe Upper Limit for vitamin C at 2,000 mg/day?

Perhaps the reason is ignorance. According to nationwide data compiled by the American Association of Poison Control Centers, vitamin C (and the use of any other dietary supplement) does not kill anyone.

Does vitamin C damage DNA?

No. If vitamin C harmed DNA, why do most animals make (not eat, but *make*) between 2,000 and 10,000 milligrams of vitamin C per human equivalent body weight per day? Evolution would never so favor anything that harms vital genetic material. White blood cells and male reproductive fluids contain unusually high quantities of ascorbate. Living, reproducing systems love vitamin C.

Does vitamin C cause low blood sugar, B-12 deficiency, birth defects, or infertility?

Vitamin C does not cause birth defects, or infertility, or miscarriage. “Harmful effects have been mistakenly attributed to vitamin C, including hypoglycemia, rebound scurvy, infertility, mutagenesis, and destruction of vitamin B-12. Health professionals should recognize that vitamin C does not produce these effects.”

A randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled 14 day trial of 3,000 mg per day of vitamin C reported greater frequency of sexual intercourse. The vitamin C group (but not the placebo group) also experienced a quantifiable decrease in depression. This is probably due to the fact that vitamin C modulates catecholaminergic activity, decreases stress reactivity, approach anxiety and prolactin release, improves vascular function, and increases oxytocin release. These processes are relevant to sexual behavior and mood.

Does vitamin C cause kidney stones?

No. The myth of the vitamin C-caused kidney stone is rivaled in popularity only by the Loch Ness Monster. A factoid-crazy medical media often overlooks the fact that William J. McCormick, M.D., demonstrated that vitamin C actually prevents the formation of kidney stones. He did so in 1946, when he published a paper on the subject. His work was confirmed by University of Alabama professor of medicine Emanuel Cheraskin, M.D., Dr. Cheraskin showed that vitamin C inhibits the formation of oxalate stones.

Other research reports that: “Even though a certain part of oxalate in the urine derives from metabolized ascorbic acid, the intake of high doses of vitamin C does not increase the risk of calcium oxalate kidney stones. In the large- scale Harvard Prospective Health Professional Follow-Up Study, those groups in the highest quintile of vitamin C intake (greater than 1,500 mg/day) had a lower risk of kidney stones than the groups in the lowest quintiles.”

Dr. Robert F. Cathcart said, “I started using vitamin C in massive doses in patients in 1969. By the time I read that ascorbate should cause kidney stones, I had clinical evidence that it did not cause kidney stones, so I continued prescribing massive doses to patients. Up to 2006, I estimate that I have put 25,000 patients on massive doses of vitamin C and none have developed kidney stones. Two patients who had dropped their doses to 500 mg a day developed calcium oxalate kidney stones. I raised their doses back up to the more massive doses and added magnesium and B-6 to their program and no more kidney stones. I think they developed the kidney stones because they were not taking enough vitamin C.”

Why did Linus Pauling die from cancer if he took all that vitamin C?

Linus Pauling, PhD, mega dose vitamin C advocate, died in 1994 from prostate cancer. Mayo Clinic cancer researcher Charles G. Moertel, M.D., critic of Pauling and vitamin C, also died in 1994, and also from cancer (lymphoma). Dr. Moertel was 66 years old. Dr. Pauling was 93 years old. One needs to make up ones own mind as to whether this does or does not indicate benefit from vitamin C.

A review of the subject indicates that “Vitamin C deficiency is common in patients with advanced cancer . . . Patients with low plasma concentrations of vitamin C have a shorter survival.”

Does vitamin C narrow arteries or cause atherosclerosis?

Abram Hoffer, M.D., has said: “I have used vitamin C in megadoses with my patients since 1952 and have not seen any cases of heart

disease develop even after decades of use”. Dr. Robert Cathcart with experience on over 25,000 patients since 1969 has seen no cases of heart disease developing in patients who did not have any when first seen. He added that the thickening of the vessel walls, if true, indicates that the thinning that occurs with age is reversed. . . The fact is that vitamin C *decreases* plaque formation according to many clinical studies. Some critics ignore the knowledge that thickened arterial walls in the absence of plaque formation indicate that the walls are becoming stronger and therefore less apt to rupture. Gokce, Keaney, Frei et al gave patients supplemental vitamin C daily for thirty days and measured blood flow through the arteries. Blood flow *increased nearly fifty percent* after the single dose and this was sustained after the monthly treatment.

What about blood pressure?

A randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled study showed that hypertensive patients taking supplemental vitamin C had lower blood pressure.

Why the flurry of anti-vitamin-C reporting in the mass media?

Negative news gets attention. Negative news sells newspapers, and magazines, and pulls in lots of television viewers. Positive *drug* studies do get headlines, of course. Positive vitamin studies do not. Is this a conspiracy? You mean with unscrupulous people all sitting around a shaded table in a darkened back room? Of course not! It is nevertheless an enormous public health problem with enormous consequences.

150 million Americans take supplemental vitamin C every day. This is as much a political issue as a scientific issue. What would happen if everybody took vitamins? Perhaps doctors, hospital administrators and pharmaceutical salespeople would all be lining up for their unemployment checks.

A skeptic might conclude that there is at least some evidence that the politicians are on the wrong side of this. After all, the US RDA for vitamin C for humans is only 10% of the government's USDA vitamin C standards for Guinea pigs.