Vitamin C, or ascorbic acid, is a well-known antioxidant with many beneficial properties. In addition to protecting your cells against the damaging effects of free radicals, vitamin C is important for your skin, bones and connective tissues. It is also an excellent anti-allergic, anti-histamine, anti-abortive, anti-scourbutic, antiseptic, hepatoprotective, mast cell stabilizer, and vascular tonic.

Without vitamin C, the body cannot make collagen, the substance that holds the body's cells together and maintains skin integrity. This is why scurvy, a disease caused by vitamin C deficiency, leads to structural deterioration characterized by brown spots on the skin, spongy gums, and bleeding from all mucous membranes. The spots are most prevalent on the thighs and legs. A person with scurvy also looks pale, feels depressed and is partially immobilized.

The lack of energy experienced in scurvy relates to vitamin C's role in energy production. It is involved in iron absorption (helping to prevent anemia) and in the synthesis of enzymes, hormones and proteins. The adrenal glands need large amounts of this nutrient in order to support immunity and help produce energy.

Vitamin C is an antioxidant and helps to protect the body against aging and chronic and degenerative diseases. Adequate intake of vitamin C decreases the risk of cardiovascular disease and strokes and causes a small reduction in systolic blood pressure. People with the highest levels of ascorbic acid in their bloodstream seem to be at a significantly lower risk of having a stroke.

Vitamin C is found in high concentrations in immune cells and is quickly consumed when the body fights infection. Although research shows mixed results, many people feel vitamin C helps decrease cold and flu symptoms and speed recovery.

Vitamin C is a natural anti-histamine. A 1992 study found that taking 2 grams of vitamin C daily lowered blood histamine levels by 38 percent in healthy adults in just one week. Vitamin C may also be useful in lowering serum uric acid levels, resulting in a correspondingly lower incidence of gout.

Vitamin C is plentiful in fresh fruits and vegetables, but is lost with storage and processing. Oranges, lemons, limes, grapefruit, red and green peppers, tomatoes, broccoli and greens contain high concentrations of vitamin C. Kakadu plum and camu camu fruit contain the highest concentrations. Rose hips and wolfberries (lycium) are good herbal sources.

Vitamin C is the most widely taken nutritional supplement and is available in a variety of forms, including tablets, drink mixes and crystals. Timed-release versions are available, as are formulations containing bioflavonoids such as quercitin, hesperidin, and rutin.

Being a water-soluble vitamin, vitamin C must be taken regularly. Many mammals are able to produce it, but human beings are not, so a regular supply must be obtained in the diet. The North American Dietary Reference Intake recommends 90 mg. of vitamin C per day and no more than 2,000 mg. per day, but many people have taken far larger doses without harm. Being one of the water-soluble vitamins, excess vitamin C is readily flushed from the body. Too much C will cause loose stools.

**Vitamin C Supplements**

NSP offers four different vitamin C supplements—each optimized for specific nutritional needs. All of these products are helpful in maintaining healthy gums, healing wounds, assisting adrenal function under conditions of stress and fatigue, boosting the immune system, and much more. Here is a brief description of each.

**Vitamin C Timed Release**

This supplement contains 1,000 mg. of ascorbic acid per tablet, plus lemon bioflavonoid extract, hesperidin, rutin, acerola fruit extract, and rose hips extract. It allows more efficient use of vitamin C by slowly releasing it into the body over a six-hour period.

**Vitamin C, Chewables (250 mg.)**

These chewable tablets contain 250 mg. of vitamin C in a base of fructose, sorbitol, freeze-dried orange juice, calcium ascorbate, xylitol, rose hips extract, and natural orange, lemon and lime flavors. Chew one to two tablets one to several times daily.

**Vitamin C Citrus Bioflavonoids**

This product contains 500 mg. vitamin C per tablet along with calcium, phosphorus, grapefruit bioflavonoid extract, hesperidin, lemon bioflavonoid extract, orange bioflavonoid extract, rutin and rose hip extract. Bioflavonoids work synergistically with vitamin C to strengthen tissues. Take one tablet one or more times daily.

**Vitamin C Ascorbates**

This powdered form of vitamin C contains 1,800 mg. vitamin C per serving, plus calcium, potassium and magnesium ascorbates, acerola fruit extract, rutin and hesperidin bioflavonoid extract. Mixed with liquid chlorophyll, it makes a great energy pick-me-up.

**Selected References**

*The Comprehensive Guide to Nature’s Sunshine Products* by Tree of Light Publishing

*PDR for Nutritional Supplements* edited by S.S. Hendler, PhD and D. Rorvik

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