



C

VITAMIN C

Strengthening Our Defenses

VITAMIN C BASICS

Also known as: Ascorbic acid

Important for: Immune system, tissue growth and repair (especially skin, cartilage, tendons, ligaments and blood vessels), bone and teeth growth and repair, eye health, nervous system

Animal Sources: Milk, liver

Grain/Fruit/Vegetable Sources: Many fruits (especially citrus fruits), blackcurrants, strawberries, guava, mango, kiwi, peppers, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, potatoes, cabbage, spinach, tomatoes

OVERVIEW

Vitamin C is a water soluble vitamin perhaps most well-known for the disease caused by its deficiency – scurvy. Vitamin C is sensitive to light and heat – long storage and overcooking can destroy vitamin C in food, but refrigeration can prevent this loss.

DISCOVERY AND HISTORY

Vitamin C was discovered in 1912, and isolated in 1928. Doubts about the link between vitamin C deficiency and scurvy lingered until 1939 when, to prove the link, Harvard Medical School surgeon John Crandon withheld vitamin C from his own diet for 19 weeks until he became suddenly and seriously ill; he received an injection of vitamin C and almost immediately recovered. Between 1500 and 1800, scurvy killed as many as 2 million sailors – on a typical long voyage, scurvy would claim the lives of half the crew.

VITAMIN C DEFICIENCY

Vitamin C deficiency is rare in developed countries, though cigarette smokers are more at risk because smoking lowers the amount of vitamin C in the body. Symptoms include:

- Dry and splitting hair
- Inflamed gums
- Bleeding gums
- Rough, dry, scaly skin
- Easy bruising
- Slower wound-healing
- Nosebleeds
- Impaired ability to fight infection
- Loss of appetite and weight
- Scurvy

POPULATIONS AT RISK OF VITAMIN C DEFICIENCY

- People not eating the recommended 2-4 servings of fruit per day and 3-5 servings of vegetables per day
- Smokers