

Vitamin C: the most well-known vitamin

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Probably the most familiar nutrient in the world! Where people would struggle to name food sources of niacin or thiamin, most can easily point to citrus fruits as sources of vitamin C. But what does it actually do for our body?

Best known as an antioxidant, vitamin C neutralises free radicals and prevent oxidative damage. In particular, it acts as a reducing agent to increase our body's absorption of plant-based iron, hence the advice to squeeze lemon over iron-rich spinach and chard.

Vitamin C is also required for synthesis of collagen, the protein that "stitches together" our skin and bones. People with severe vitamin C deficiency (or scurvy) begin losing teeth, bone strength and bleed easily.

Additionally, vitamin C is essential in the synthesis of some neurotransmitters, in particular in the production of the "happy chemical" serotonin. Evidence suggests that healthy vitamin C intake is necessary for normal neuronal function and can have a positive impact on our mood!

The recommended daily intake for adults is between 75mg-90mg. Humans are unable to synthesise vitamin C naturally so we need to make sure we consume enough from external sources. The good news is that the vitamin is abundant in many foods, so reach out for a whole food diet rather than supplements. Here are a few examples of vitamin C-rich everyday foods.



Bell peppers come in a rainbow of colors

An excellent source of vitamin C (1 cup gives 157% D.V.), most bell peppers actually start out as green. As the plant matures, its composition of carotenoids changes, thus leading to the various vibrant hues of red, orange, yellow and even purple! When dried and ground, it is known as “paprika”.

Pineapples: more than just a pina colada

Similar to oranges, pineapples grow out in segments that interlock with each other in 2 helices. When observed from the top, you can see 13 spirals in one direction and 8 in the other, each of which are Fibonacci numbers. 1 cup of pineapples provides 105% D.V. of vitamin C and 67% D.V. of manganese. The latter is an enzyme cofactor in energy production and antioxidant defense.

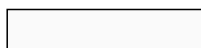


“Thyme” for this superstar to shine

Did you know that herbs provide vitamins as well? 2 tablespoons of thyme provide 10% D.V. of vitamin C. Used since ancient times for its culinary properties, thyme’s penetrating fragrance is hard to miss. Thymol, a major component in thyme oil, has been found to protect and increase the amount of healthy fats in cells, in particular DHA (docosahexaenoic acid), an omega-3 fatty acid.

Grapefruits: the tart and tangy rivals of oranges

Aside from being an excellent source of vitamin C, grapefruits also contain lycopene in its pink and red variants. Research has shown that regular consumption of lycopene-rich foods with green tea led to significantly reduced risk of prostate cancer in men. Here’s a cool tip for the summer; infuse a bottle of water with green tea and grapefruit overnight, and sip throughout the next day!





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