

Vitamin C For A Healthy You

HONESDALE (Wayne Co.) — Fresh fruits and vegetables of all kinds are on the grocers' shelves and appearing at local farmers' markets. "There are so many to choose from that it's hard to believe that many folks still aren't eating enough of these healthy and delicious foods," says Debra Bryant, Wayne County Extension Director.

Have I had my "Five-A-Day" is the question each of us should be asking ourselves? Two servings of fruit and three of vegetables is the

minimum we need each day to stay healthy. A U.S. Department of Agriculture study found that the average American eats only 2 and 1/2 servings of fruits and vegetables a day.

Why all the fuss over fruits and vegetables? Bryant says, "One reason is that these foods are excellent sources of vitamin C." Folks who get plenty of vitamin C reduce their risk of certain diseases, like cancer, heart disease and high blood pressure.

Over 90 large-scale population

studies have been conducted on the relationship between vitamin C or foods high in vitamin C and cancer. In about three-fourths of these studies, high vitamin C intake significantly reduced the risk of cancer.

Evidence of this safeguarding effect was especially strong for cancers of the oral cavity, esophagus, stomach and pancreas. Substantial evidence also exists that vitamin C can protect against cervical, rectal, breast and lung cancer.

Vitamin C seems to act as an antioxidant in the blood stream, countering particles called free radicals that are formed by the body. Free radicals can damage cells. This damage is thought to be one of the first steps in the development of cancer.

Not getting enough vitamin C also has been linked to three major heart disease risks — low density lipoproteins (LDL) cholesterol, high density lipoproteins (HDL) and high blood pressure. Recent research found that people who got the most vitamin C had more

HDL (good cholesterol) and less LDL (bad cholesterol) than individuals with low vitamin C intakes. They also were much less likely to have high blood pressure.

One theory on heart disease is that it begins when LDL, the major carrier of cholesterol in the blood, is oxidized in the blood by free radicals. Researchers have reason to believe oxidized LDL starts the formation of blood vessel-clogging plaque that leads to atherosclerosis, hardening of the arteries.

Although it may be tempting to take vitamin supplements, it's better to get needed nutrients from foods, simply because foods contain many other nutrients.

The recommended daily allowance of vitamin C for healthy adults is 60 mg. Some fruits rich in vitamin C are berries (blueberries, raspberries and strawberries), citrus (grapefruit, oranges, tangerines), kiwi, melons (cantaloupe, honeydew, watermelon), papaya and pineapple.

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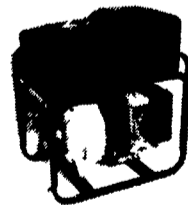
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