Vitamin C is a water-soluble vitamin in fruits and vegetables. It helps us grow. Our bodies need Vitamin C, especially when we get hurt or have a cold or a virus. Vitamin C is used to make collagen, a protein that is used in our skin, bones, blood vessels, and tendons and it helps form scar tissue when we get hurt.

**How much vitamin C should we have?**

We need to eat some foods with vitamin C every day. We should eat the following amounts of Vitamin C every day:

- **Ages 4 to 8:** 15 mg/day or about 3 or 4 strawberries.
- **Ages 9 to 13:** 25 mg/day or about 1/2 of kiwifruit.
- **Girls 14 to 18:** 65 mg/day or about 1 cup of cantaloupe cubes.
- **Boys 14 to 18:** 75 mg/day or about 1 orange.
- **Women 19 & up:** 75 mg/day or about 1/2 cup of broccoli.
- **Men 19 & up:** 90 mg/day or about 1/2 cup of red sweet pepper.

**Where can we get Vitamin C?**

We can get it from most all fruits and vegetables such as oranges, sweet potatoes, lemons, turnip greens, red peppers, tomatoes, white potatoes, strawberries, broccoli, cantaloupe, mango, papaya, winter squash, watermelon, cabbage, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, raspberries, blueberries, cranberries, and pineapples.

**What happens if we don’t get enough Vitamin C?**

Vitamin C deficiency can lead to bleeding gums, rough and dry skin, slow healing when hurt, easy bruising, nosebleeds, weight gain, and a decrease in immunity (can get sick often).

**What is the role of Vitamin C in the body?**

Vitamin C is an antioxidant. What is an antioxidant? An anti-oxidant is a large molecule that removes free radicals from our bodies. Free radicals cause a lot of damage and vitamin C helps remove them and helps protect the cells of our body from damage.

Vitamin C can decrease the risk for heart disease, stroke, cancer, as well as it can decrease the risk of cataracts and gout. Vitamin C can help strengthen the immune system and prevents colds and flu.

Even though the benefits of Vitamin C seem really good, too much Vitamin C can be harmful to our bodies. The University of Florida says that you should not take more than 2000 mg of calcium per day. But, if you consume vitamin C from foods, you won't have a chance of getting excessive levels.
Pennington Nutrition Series No 70

Authors
Beth Kalicki
Heli J. Roy, PhD, RD

Division of Education
Phillip Brantley, PhD, Director

Pennington Biomedical Research Center
Steven Heymsfield, MD, Executive Director
4/10; Rev. 3/11

WORD BANK

VITAMINIC               STRAWBERRY               PAPAYA               IMMUNE               TOMATO
DISSOLVE               CANTELOUPE               CANCER               GROWTH               WATERMELON
INFECTION               CITRUS               PINEAPPLE               REPAIR               BLUEBERRY
PROTECT               COLLAGEN               RASPBERRY               MANGO