

Vitamin E and Cancer

Getting lots of vitamin E may cut by half the risk for certain cancers.

Question:

I've heard in the news that vitamin E can ward off cancer. How does it work and how much do I need?

C.D., Monterrey, California

Answer:

Two studies released recently by the American Association for Cancer Research suggest that getting plenty of vitamin E appears to cut by half the risk for certain types of cancer, such as bladder and prostate cancers.

One study compared specific eating habits of healthy people to those with prostate and bladder cancers. The other study was based on questionnaires about the eating habits of about 1,000 Houston residents. It showed that those whose vitamin E intake was in the top 25 percent had half as much prostate cancer as those in the lowest 25 percent.

Researchers speculate that the vitamin may be helpful in warding off the damaging effects of oxygen on cells in the body. Also, as you get older a subset of your immune system, known as T cells, gradually declines. T cells have a major role in helping another subset, known as B cells, produce antibodies that fight off infections and kill viruses, bacteria and tumors.

In general, your immune system produces fewer antibodies as you age. In contrast with the decline of T cells and antibodies, there is an increase in the bad kind of

antibodies, called “autoantibodies,” that attack certain parts of your body.

Exciting research shows this decline in function of your immune system can be reversed and that immunity can be boosted with certain supplements, such as vitamin E. Several studies have shown that people given vitamin E supplements actually improve their T cell function.

Apparently, vitamin E decreases the production of free radicals and another chemical known as prostaglandins. As a result, T cell function increases and additional antibodies develop to fight disease. Good sources of vitamin E include nuts and seeds, whole-grain products, olive oil, beans, spinach, peas and other vegetables. Extra vitamin E in supplement form is also needed.

The best results occur as vitamin E levels reach 800 IU (International Units) daily. Most supplements contain the d-alpha tocopherol form of vitamin E. However, to most closely duplicate what you get in foods, you need a supplement that contains all forms of vitamin E.

The daily supplement formula I recommend includes 800 IU of vitamin E in the form of d-alpha tocopheryl succinate, 5 IU in mixed tocopherols and 210 milligrams of a mixed tocotrienol complex.

Question:

For a headache, I often reach for over-the-counter pain medications, but I am concerned about their safety. Are there natural remedies instead?

M.A., Detroit, Michigan

Answer:

You have good reason to be concerned. According to the Food and Drug Administration, many people are unaware of the dangers of excessive use of over-the-counter pain medications, especially acetaminophen.

Too much acetaminophen can cause serious liver damage. In fact, acetaminophen causes almost 50 percent of all acute liver failure—four times that caused by all prescription drugs combined. Acetaminophen overdose is the leading cause for calls to poison control centers and accounts for more than 56,000 emergency room visits, 2,600 hospitalizations and about 450 deaths each year.

Because acetaminophen is in more than 600 products, it's easily available. When immediate pain relief is not achieved, it's easy to reach for more. But when more than the recommended dose is taken for several days, the drug accumulates in the liver and causes irreversible damage.

So where can you find relief from your pain—the natural way?

Scientific studies show that bromelain (an enzyme derived from pineapple) and cat's claw extract help relieve the pain associated with muscle soreness. For your headache, try willow bark or feverfew. Willow bark contains salicin, a natural form of the active ingredient in aspirin, and feverfew has been shown to reduce swelling of blood vessels in the brain, which can lead to headaches.

Reginald B. Cherry, M.D., has been practicing diagnostic and preventative medicine for more than 30 years and specializes in the use of nutrition, exercise and natural supplements to

lower disease risk. He is the author of several best-selling books, as well as a series of God's Pathway to Healing booklets, and teaches health and healing through his weekly TV program, The Doctor and The Word. For more about his ministry, go to .