

Vitamin E

Vitamin E is one of the most important dietary supplements that people do not know its tremendous effect. It is a fat-soluble vitamin present in many foods, especially certain fats and oil. It is one of a number of nutrients called *antioxidants*.

Dietary Sources

- Vegetable oils including: olive, corn, safflower, soybean, cottonseed, and canola; nuts (almonds, hazelnuts, and walnuts);
- Liver, eggs, sunflower seeds; corn-oil margarine; mayonnaise; mustard, turnip, sweet potatoes; avocado, asparagus and yams.
- Dark green leafy vegetables like spinach and kale, and fortified cereals are common food sources of vitamin E. The richest source of vitamin E is wheat germ.

Functions of Vitamin E

1. Vitamin E helps in preventing arteries from clogging by blocking the conversion of cholesterol into the waxy fat deposits that stick to blood vessel walls.
2. Vitamin E thins the blood, allowing for blood to flow more easily through arteries even when plaque is present and prevent the formation of blood clots, which could lead to a heart attack. Supplemental vitamin E is used in treating atherosclerosis.
3. It reduces the risk of death from stroke in postmenopausal women. It reduces the severity of postmenopausal signs especially hot flashes for this group of women.
4. Vitamin E may be helpful in both the treatment and prevention of osteoarthritis as indicated by a study comparing vitamin E with diclofenac (a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug), the result shows that both have the same effect in treating osteoarthritis.
5. Vitamin E is used to prevent and treat Alzheimer's disease which affect elderly and women during post menopausal period.
6. Vitamin E may help to protect against cataracts (clouding of the lens of the eye).

Antioxidants are nutrients that block some of the damage caused by toxic by-products (free radicals) released when the body transforms food into energy or fights off infection. The build up of these by-products over time is largely responsible for the aging process. Antioxidants provide some protection against health conditions such as heart disease, cancer, and a host of inflammatory conditions like arthritis and help reduce the damage to the body caused by toxic chemicals and pollutants.

Vitamin E, along with other standard treatments, may also be beneficial for the following:

- Protecting from frostbite and other cold-induced injuries.
- Diminishing the negative effects of environmental pollutants.
- Improving anemia and protect the red blood cells against hemolysis, and prevent destruction of Vit A and C .
- Speeding wound and burn healing; and reducing scarring .
- Lowering blood pressure.
- Slowing progression of Parkinson's disease.
- Treating lupus .
- Replacing necessary nutrients in those with inflammatory bowel disease, such as ulcerative colitis .
- Avoiding miscarriage (spontaneous abortion), which may be associated with very low levels of this nutrient.
- Used to reduce free radicals that are formed from smoking tobacco.
- It can be used to treat infertility, impotence, ulcers, diabetes, skin disorders, burns, shortness of breath, and muscular dystrophy, protect against air pollution, reverse gray hair and wrinkles, and slow the aging process.

References:

1. Dudek, S. "Nutrition Handbook For Nursing Practice". 3rd Ed., Lippincot, New York, 1997.
2. www.vitaminefacts.org