

Vitamin C

What Does Vitamin C Do?

- Vitamin C helps make collagen, which helps bind your cells together. In this way, vitamin C helps keep your gums healthy and aids in the healing of cuts and wounds.
- Vitamin C helps your body absorb iron. If you eat foods with vitamin C and iron at the same meal, your body absorbs up to three times more iron.
- Vitamin C is a powerful antioxidant. These nutrients help protect your cells from damage that can increase your risk of certain diseases, such as cancer.
- Vitamin C strengthens your immune system. However, research has not shown that high doses of vitamin C will prevent or cure the common cold.

How Much Vitamin C Do You Need?

The amount of vitamin C you need each day is measured in milligrams (mg). Here are guidelines for healthy, nonsmoking individuals:

- Teenage boys (ages 14 to 18 years): 75 mg vitamin C per day
- Teenage girls (ages 14 to 18 years): 65 mg vitamin C per day (80 mg if pregnant; 115 mg if breastfeeding)
- Men (ages 19 years and older): 90 mg vitamin C per day
- Women (ages 19 years and older): 75 mg vitamin C per day (85 mg if pregnant; 120 mg if breastfeeding)

If you smoke, you need at least an extra 35 mg of vitamin C each day.

How Much Vitamin C Is Too Much?

- For adults, the recommended daily limit for vitamin C is 2,000 mg.
- Excessive amounts of vitamin C from supplements may cause diarrhea.
- If you had kidney stones in the past, avoid large amounts of vitamin C supplements.

Tips for Getting More Vitamin C from Foods

- Vitamin C breaks down in food over time. Eat foods with vitamin C soon after purchase. Blanching foods quickly and then freezing them can preserve the vitamin for a longer time.
- Some vitamin C is lost when a food is exposed to air or heat or cooked in water. To keep the most vitamin C in foods, steam, stir-fry, or microwave them. When cooking in water, boil the foods for the minimum amount of time. Use a small amount of water.
- Avoid using copper pans for cooking. The copper can reduce the vitamin C in foods.
- Eat fruits and vegetables at every meal.



Which Foods Have Vitamin C?

Food	Serving Size	Vitamin C (mg)
Red peppers, raw	1 cup	190
Green peppers, raw	1 cup	120
Cranberry juice cocktail	1 cup	107
Broccoli	1 cup	101 (cooked); 78 (raw)
Strawberries, sliced	1 cup	98
Brussels sprouts, cooked	1 cup	97
Orange juice	1 cup	82
Snow peas, cooked	1 cup	77
Pineapple	1 cup	74 (raw); 24 (canned)
Oranges or kiwi fruit, raw	1 medium fruit	70
Grapefruit juice or vegetable juice cocktail, canned	1 cup	67
Cantaloupe, raw	1 cup	59
Mangos, raw	1 mango	57
Cabbage	1 cup	56 (cooked); 25 (raw)
Cauliflower	1 cup	56 (cooked); 46 (raw)
Asparagus, cooked	1 cup	44
Peas, cooked	1 cup	35
Raspberries, blackberries, or honeydew, raw	1 cup	31
Lemons, raw	1 lemon	31
Soybeans, cooked	1 cup	31
Spinach, canned	1 cup	31
Sweet potato (with skin), cooked	1 potato	29
Okra, cooked	1 cup	26
Watermelon, raw	1 wedge	23
Tomatoes, raw or canned	1 cup	23