Higher Vitamin C Intake Associated With Lower Risk of Gout

by Pamela Jones, MA

Gout is a build up of uric acid crystals. These crystals tend to accumulate in the joints causing pain and swelling. It is the most common type of inflammatory arthritis in men. Most treatment focuses on lifestyle changes such as a low-purine diet and lots of fluids. In severe cases, medicine may be given to reduce uric acid levels in the body. Some past studies have indicated that higher vitamin C intake may help reduce uric acid levels. The recommended dietary allowance for vitamin C is 75 mg-90 mg per day.

Researchers from Vancouver General Hospital, designed a study to examine the benefits of a high vitamin C diet for preventing gout. The study, published in the Archives of Internal Medicine, found that higher dietary vitamin C was associated with a lower risk of gout.

About the Study

The study was designed as a prospective cohort study. The researchers did not manipulate any factors but simply observed and recorded data. The study began with 46,994 men with no history of gout. Over a 20-year period, the men were asked to fill out a survey indicating the presence of gout and intake of vitamin C every four years. At the end of the study period 1,317 men had developed gout.

Compared to men that consumed less than 250 mg per day of vitamin C, the risk of gout was:

- 17% lower for men with a daily vitamin C intake of 500-999 mg
- 34% lower for men with a daily vitamin C intake of 1,000-1,499 mg
- 45% lower for men with a daily vitamin C intake of greater than or equal to 1,500 mg

How Does This Affect You?

Vitamin C appears to be beneficial in decreasing the risk of gout. Fortunately, vitamin C is pretty well tolerated, even at doses well above the recommended dietary allowance. The upper limits studied here still fell below the maximum daily recommended intake of 2,000 mg/day.

If your risk for gout is low, a diet rich in vitamin C (eg, high in fresh fruits and vegetables) should be sufficient. However, if your risk for gout is high, particularly if you’ve ever had an attack of gouty arthritis in the past, this study suggests that you may wish to consider supplementing your diet with 500–1,000 mg/day of vitamin C. If you’re unsure, consult your doctor.

RESOURCES:

American Academy of Family Physicians
http://www.familydoctor.org/

American Dietetic Association
http://www.eatright.org/

REFERENCES:


Last reviewed April 2009 by Richard Glickman-Simon, MD