

Vitamin E Linked to Lung Cancer



Taking high doses of Vitamin E supplements can actually increase the risk of lung cancer. A study of 77,000 people found consuming 400 milligrams of Vitamin E per day increased cancer risk by 28 percent. Smokers were at particular risk.

An expert writing in the American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine said that people should get their vitamins from fruit and vegetables rather than supplements.

Vitamin E is known to be an antioxidant that protects cells from molecules called free radicals. But in high doses, it may also act as a pro-oxidant, causing oxidation and damage to cells.

Sources:

- [BBC News February 29, 2008](#)
- [American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine March 1, 2008; 177\(5\):524-30](#)

Vitamin E: Healer or Killer? Two Sides of the Same Coin

There have been numerous studies pointing out the two sides of Vitamin E. On the one hand Vitamin E has been found to have strong health promoting influences by protecting against damaging free radicals – because it is a very effective antioxidant for many fats.

On the other, it has been found that it can also increase, rather than reduce, oxidation and speed up the onset of both heart disease and cancer [if you smoke and eat a diet high in polyunsaturated fat](#).

According to one such study, Vitamin E can induce heart disease through “reductive stress.” *Reductive stress is a condition caused by excessive levels of reduced glutathione, which is one of your body’s most powerful antioxidants.* When your cells work properly, they produce just the right amount of reduced glutathione, which is healthy for your body. However, in some people, a mutated gene can disrupt the fine balance, causing the cells to produce too much.

Additionally, Vitamin E should not be given to certain brain injured children, such as those with some types of autism. In these cases, accumulations of long chain fats require oxidation to remove them, which is impaired by Vitamin E, actually making the disease worse.

On the other hand, one classic [NEJM study](#) found that Vitamin E can **reduce** your risk for heart disease by up to 80 percent.

Another study published in [Life Extension Magazine](#) came to the same conclusion, stating that [Vitamin E reduces high levels of the inflammation-causing proteins](#) C-reactive protein (CRP) and IL-6, which are likely contributors to heart disease. (Blood levels of both CRP and IL-6 are often elevated in patients with heart disease, indicating an increased risk for heart attack.)

And other studies have shown that Vitamin E:

- [May lower risk of asthma and allergies](#)
- [May help treat menstrual pain](#)
- [Improves circulation in diabetics](#)
- [Helps prevent prostate and breast cancers](#)
- [Slows down cognitive decline](#)
- [May help hot flashes](#)

So as you can see, there's plenty of evidence for both sides of the argument. Vitamin E may lower the risk of disease in some people, and raise the risk in others. But what's most likely at the heart of this discrepancy?

All Vitamin E are Not Created Equal

Ever since its discovery in 1922 there has been much discussion over what type of Vitamin E is best. Many do not know that the term "*Vitamin E*" actually refers to a family of at least eight fat-soluble antioxidant compounds, divided into two groups of molecules: tocopherols (which are considered the "true" Vitamin E) and tocotrienols.

Each of the tocopherol and tocotrienol subfamilies contains four different forms:

- **Alpha-**
- **Beta-**
- **Gamma-**
- **Delta-**

Each one of these subgroups has its own unique biological effects.

Ideally, Vitamin E should be consumed in the broader family of mixed natural tocopherols and tocotrienols, (also referred to as full-spectrum vitamin E) to get the maximum benefits.

And there's the main problem: the Vitamin E most often referred to and sold in most stores is a synthetic form of the vitamin, which really should NOT be used if you want to reap any of its health benefits.

You can tell what you're buying by carefully reading the label.

- Natural vitamin E is always listed as the "d-" form (*d-alpha-tocopherol, d-beta-tocopherol, etc.*)
- Synthetic vitamin E is listed as "dl-" forms

When Vitamin E is stabilized by adding either succinic acid or acetic acid, the chemical name changes from tocopherol to tocopheryl (as in *d-alpha-tocopheryl succinate*, for example). Your body can easily distinguish between natural and synthetic vitamins, and several studies have shown that natural Vitamin E is between two and three times as bioactive as the same amount of synthetic Vitamin E.

And, this brings us to the best source of natural vitamins . . .

Food - Not a Supplement - is Your Best Source of Vitamin E

Free radicals are a natural byproduct of breathing; antioxidants such as Vitamin E mop up the excess, and leave the rest of the free radicals to fulfill their other functions, which include things like turning air and food into chemical energy, and aiding your immune response by attacking foreign invaders and bacteria. This fine balancing act can be easily tipped to the point of either too much or too little. Eliminating or dramatically reducing free radicals could actually lead to more problems than are solved.

The Goldilock's equation, meaning [you need just the right amount to achieve optimal health](#) – not too much and not too little – is the answer here. Your body can do a phenomenal job of self-regulating many of these levels if you supply it with wholesome, healthy foods and dramatically limit your intake of processed foods, which are loaded with artificial chemicals.

Tocopherol and its subgroups are found in certain nuts and green leafy vegetables. Sources of tocotrienols include palm oil, rice bran and barley oils. However, many Americans do not get nearly enough of dietary Vitamin E due to their poor dietary choices.

So, yes, Vitamin E is an antioxidant with powerful health benefits, but you need to make sure you're getting them from the right sources -- from the food you eat. A diet rich in fresh vegetables and nuts will usually supply the whole nutrients needed to walk this fine line. Always remember that not only are nuts and leafy greens rich in Vitamin E, they also contain hundreds of other natural chemicals that create a synergistic effect where the total benefit is far greater than the sum of its parts.

When buying vegetables, I strongly recommend that you try to find locally grown, organic produce, as they often contain greater concentrations of vital nutrients.

Remember also that the [Take Control of Your Health program](#), which includes the entire program of eating the healthiest foods in all the right proportions for [your nutritional type](#), can help you solve most of the problems with "too much" versus "too little" when it comes to essential nutrients. If you are not eating properly according to your nutritional type – by far the most important step you can take to improve your health – no supplement will "save" you.

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