



University of California  
Cooperative Extension  
**Tulare County**

Agriculture and Natural Resources



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## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT VITAMIN E

Vitamin E is a powerful antioxidant that protects body tissues from damage caused by “free radicals.” Free radicals result from normal bodily functions and from exposure to environmental factors such as cigarette smoke and sunlight. They cause damage to the cells in the body.

Free radicals contribute to the development of cancer, heart disease and other health problems. Vitamin E is indispensable to good health. Every cell in the body needs vitamin E, but it is especially important in protecting blood cells, the nervous system, skeletal muscle and the retinas in your eyes from damage.

Much remains unknown about the benefits of vitamin E but current research has shown that along with other antioxidants such as vitamin C and selenium, vitamin E may help lower the risk of heart disease, strokes, cataracts and diabetes. Other benefits of vitamin E include slowing the oxidation of LDL or “bad” cholesterol, preventing blood clot formation, enhancing the immune system and benefiting the nervous system.

The recommended daily allowance (RDA) for healthy adults is 15 milligrams (mg) alpha-tocopherol per day and should not exceed 1,000 mg per day. The average American gets about 8-12 mg per day—not meeting the RDA. Vitamin E requirements differ with age, gender and health status. Another factor that increases Vitamin E requirements is a diet rich in polyunsaturated fats such as corn oil and fish such as tuna,

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salmon and trout. Polyunsaturated fats are easily oxidized, increasing the need for dietary vitamin E. Foods especially rich in vitamin E include sunflower, safflower and cottonseed oils, sunflower seeds and almonds.

Because there is not enough evidence at this time, no national scientific organizations have recommended vitamin E supplements for healthy Americans. However supplementation is recommended with some medical conditions such as malabsorption. If supplementation is considered, consult your physician to prevent possible drug nutrient interactions.

**Source: Nutrition Perspectives, Nov/Dec 2000**

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