Special Report

The Truth About the Vitamin E Death Scare

You may have seen the latest reports in the media attacking vitamin E. But don't throw out your vitamin E supplement just yet. First, let me tell you the *whole truth* behind this outrageous death scare. I'm going to tell you the part of the story you *didn't* get from the media. Then you decide.

Typical of the mainstream media, you got the trashy novel version…complete with scary headline titles and half truths. In fact, most of what you got reads more like fiction, than fact-based information.

How The Death Scare Got Started

Our "story" starts with reports of a recent study done on vitamin E. Researchers at Johns Hopkins University concluded that higher doses of vitamin E (400 IU's or more), could increase the risk of death. I have received a lot of questions about this study, so I decided to include a special report this month to answer these concerns.

This study is terribly flawed. In fact, I can't decide what's more outrageous. The media's slanted coverage or that this study was even released. It's caused confusion and unnecessary fear for the millions of people who take this safe and very valuable vitamin for improving their health.

I'll tell you why I disagree with both the conclusions of this study and the spin the media has decided to give it. I will try to clarify the issues raised by the study. I'll give you an overview of vitamin E. And I'll explain why it's so useful for your good health. I'll tell you what form of vitamin E is best to take and how much of it you need.

What's Wrong With This Study

This study is not a physical study in its own right. It's a study of 19 *other* studies, pre-selected by the researchers, that were published during the past 11 years. It's a so-called "meta-analysis." The information from these studies was fed into some 'meta-analysis' software. The information was then adjusted to eventually reach certain conclusions. It concluded that there may be a very small increase in death associated with high doses of vitamin E. But there's no proof behind this conclusion. Here's why:

- Most of the high dose trials they studied were very small. Therefore there is questionable statistical weight.
- Many of the people studied had serious diseases such as cancer and kidney failure. This means they were at greater risk of dying anyway.
- Half the people studied were taking other vitamins and minerals in addition to vitamin E. So there's no way to know if vitamin E was the cause of their death.
- This study looked at "all-cause" death. Meaning they could have died from any cause. For all they knew, it could have been from cancer, heart disease or getting hit by a bus.
- Of the 19 studies looked at, 18 of them showed no real difference in the death rate between people who took high doses of vitamin E and those who didn't. Only one report

found a negative link. The researchers chose to focus on that *one,* instead of on the 18 reports that didn't.

- This study was not randomized properly. Good studies make sure the study group taking the supplement tested is the same as the placebo group. We call the randomization. In this case, the study group had higher rates of smoking and heart disease. Since the study was over 11 years and some people are going to die in that time anyway, you would expect a higher death rate from all causes in the smokers with pre-existing heart disease (which is what happened to create the stir). The study didn't prove that the Vitamin E caused any deaths at all.
- And what *form* of Vitamin E was it? Was it natural or synthetic? The difference is significant. Was it a broad spectrum of Vitamin E or just a single compound? It's not clear if the researchers knew. If they did, it wasn't a factor in the conclusion of the study. And it definitely should have been. (More on this topic is detailed below under the section "Not All Vitamin E Supplements Are Created Equal").

If all this doesn't prove that this study is flawed and misleading, here's more proof…

There are thousands of *other* studies showing that vitamin E is beneficial. (You'll learn about some of the studies that provide the proof in this report.) It's been proven to prevent heart disease because it helps keep the bad (LDL) cholesterol from attaching to your artery walls. It also acts as a mild blood thinner, making clots less likely to form. It can also prevent diabetes, stroke, Alzheimer's disease, cancer and eye diseases such as cataracts and macular degeneration. Time and time again. The evidence couldn't be *more* clear. The benefits of vitamin E are extraordinary.

I have absolutely no problem recommending that you take vitamin E. As I take it myself. And will continue to do so.

Know Thy Source Of Information

In the end, you'll have to make up your own mind about vitamin E. But, you need to know the *whole* truth. So know this: this study was funded, in part, by a pharmaceutical company. And pharmaceutical companies can't make any money by selling you vitamins. They are natural substances. So they can't be patented. No patent, no huge artificially maintained profit margins. Natural substances that improve your health are a threat to the drug companies. After all, if you are healthy because you take vitamins, then you may not need their costly and risky drugs. What's important for you to understand is that the pharmaceutical industry's main goal is to make money. And that's fine. You should realize that they are *not* in business to tell you what's best for you. Especially if it could hurt their bottom line.

I've seen it time and time again. What we have here is yet another example of the traditional medical establishment partnered with the mainstream media to try to discredit the value and safety of nutritional supplements. But as a Health Confidential reader, YOU get to make your decisions based on all the facts.

So What Is Vitamin E?

Vitamin E is a powerful antioxidant. Antioxidants protect your cells from the damage caused by free radicals. Exposure to free radicals is absolutely unavoidable. Free radicals are produced when your body uses oxygen. Like when you breathe. (Try avoiding *that!*) You are also

exposed to free radical damage from sunlight and harsh substances like cigarette smoke. Free radical damage is shown to promote the development of such terrible and deadly diseases like cancer and heart disease. And vitamin E is a *proven* disease fighter, since it protects you from free radical damage.

Vitamin E is a fat-soluble vitamin. In order to get the best absorption, you should take it with some dietary fat. Olive oil is a good choice. Vitamin E consists of 8 compounds. It is divided into 2 groups named tocopherols and tocotrienols. In plants they are blended together. That is why you can get the best form of vitamin E from your food. Good sources of vitamin E are found in nuts, seeds and vegetables. But it's almost impossible to get enough vitamin E from the food you eat. You'd have to eat 2 cups of almonds a day to get the antioxidant effect you need! That's why it's necessary for you to take a supplement. But…

A Rose Is A Rose, But All Vitamin E Is Not The Same

All Vitamin E supplements are not created equal. You'll never hear this from the vitamin companies. There are 2 reasons for this. First of all, most of them use the inferior kind. Why? It's the cheapest, that's why! The *inferior* kind is the synthetic form of vitamin E. It's not nearly as potent. You should take *only* the natural form. The natural form is labeled "d." The synthetic form is labeled "d, l."

Here's the second reason that all vitamin E supplements aren't the same. Most of them don't have all of the eight compounds of vitamin E. Most only use alpha tocopherol (*a*-tocopherol). Not surprising, again, this is by far the cheapest form. And it is not the *best.* It is not the most potent. And getting too much of it can actually hinder the absorption of the other types of vitamin E.

The strongest forms of vitamin E are gamma tocopherol and delta tocotrienol. But a supplement that has high amounts of *a*-tocopherol will block absorption of these forms. And this block can cause a pro-oxidant rather than an antioxidant action. It's where vitamin E actually acts as a free radical, rather than a free radical *fighter*. This is the opposite of what a vitamin should do. And definitely not what you want.

So read the label carefully. Make sure you are getting all 8 forms of vitamin E in your supplement. Some vitamin makers will list each tocopherol and tocotrienol individually. Others may list all of the forms as "mixed tocopherols and tocotrienols."

What Is The Proper Dose?

In order to get the most benefit from vitamin E, you should take 200—400 IU's a day. And don't worry! This dose is completely safe. The safety of vitamin E is well-established. The general health risk of too much vitamin E is low. The Institute of Medicine (IOM) set an Upper Tolerable Intake for vitamin E at 1,500 IU's a day. So my recommendation for good health of 200—400 IU's a day falls safely within these limits.

I believe supplementing with vitamin E is highly beneficial. But more than that, I believe it is absolutely essential. So if you're taking it now, by all means, continue to do so. And if you're not, I strongly recommend you consider it.

Information Is The Best Medicine

Because vitamin E is a vitamin, sometimes people tend to forget about the powerful effect it can have on the body. And, as I mentioned above, just because the label says vitamin E, it doesn't mean it's the best kind. Or, that it's even good for you at all. Most people take the cheapest form of vitamin E (alpha tocopherol). Because they are uninformed. And it's what most grocery stores and pharmacies line their shelves with. As I mentioned, taking this single form of vitamin E can actually be bad for you. Without the presence of gamma tocopherol, alpha tocopherol can actually do more harm than good.

Now, I want to tell you about some studies that were done on beta-carotene in 1996. It's a classic example of the effects of taking one nutrient on its own. Bear with me here. I'm not really going off in another direction. The same principle is involved with the subject at hand—vitamin E.

Two studies (called the ATBC and CARET studies) showed evidence that taking beta-carotene *alone* may increase cancer risks for smokers. The reason is that all the carotenoids, which beta-carotene is one, work together as a team. This team work is how they provide health benefits. In other words, other carotenoids such as lutein have to be included to duplicate nature. But this is not explained to the general public. Scary headlines sell so much better.

Simply put, if you take just *one part* of a nutrient and give it to someone who does not have a known shortage of that part of the nutrient, then it can do more harm to the body than good.

Sometimes Less Is Best

If a little of something is good, then more of it is even better. Right? NO! For some things, nothing could be further from the truth. Vitamin C is a good example. Vitamin C is a wonderful nutrient. And it can be taken in high doses. But only for short periods. And only if you are sick! If you take more than 400 mgs a day and you are not sick, the acid in your stomach reacts with an excess amount from the vitamin C. The result is that you actually produce free radicals! The exact opposite of what you are trying to achieve. But most people have come to believe that high doses of vitamin C are the best thing since sliced bread. Most vitamin manufacturers certainly agree.

The bottom line is that you need to duplicate nature as much as possible. And how do you do that? For a start, you don't take high doses of any one nutrient. Particularly the common vitamins. Especially if they are the synthetic form. Make sure your beta-carotene is taken with other carotenoids. You also make sure your vitamin E is a mix of all of its forms.

Thousands of Studies Prove How You Can Benefit

There's not enough space to show you thousands of studies on vitamin E. So here are just a few that prove what vitamin E can do for you…

Prevent Heart Disease

There are a tremendous amount of studies that prove vitamin E prevents heart disease. A Harvard study reported in the *New England Journal of Medicine* is one of many. This study found that men who took a high dose of vitamin E had a lower risk of heart disease. Another study found that 75% of cardiologists recommend that their patients take a vitamin E supplement (generally 400 IU).[1]

Prevent Death

A study was done on over 11,000 people between the ages of 67—105. It was reported in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.* It found that supplementing with vitamin E reduced the risk of death from all causes. In particular, they found it reduced the risk of death from heart disease.[2]

Prevent Cancer

Many studies have found that vitamin E lowers the rate of prostate, breast, colon and cervical cancer.

Slow Down Alzheimer's Disease

There is no cure for Alzheimer's disease. But several studies have suggested that vitamin E can act to prevent this disease. There are studies that show it improves brain function by enhancing short term memory and problem-solving skills. And a study reported in the April, 2004 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine* shows that vitamin E slows down the progression of this mind robbing disease.[3]

Reduce the Risk of Vision Loss

A study in the *Archives of Ophthalmology* reports that the use of zinc, together with antioxidants, including vitamin E, may reduce the risk of getting age-related macular degeneration (AMD). AMD is the leading cause of blindness. This study found that zinc plus vitamin E and other antioxidants reduced the risk by 25%.[4]

Benefits For Diabetics

The result of a study was published in the November 2004 issue of the *American Diabetes Association Journal Diabetes Care.* It showed that about 40% of diabetics can lower their risk of a heart attack and dying from heart disease by taking a vitamin E supplement.[5]

What Other Experts Are Saying

The list of other credible medical experts who have blasted this flawed study seems endless. I'll just give you a few of them…

Dr. John Hancock, the vice president of scientific and nutritional affairs at the Council for Responsible Nutrition (CRN) says he disagrees with the conclusion of this study. He said he is not convinced that high doses of vitamin E are risky. He said, "In reviewing the totality of evidence on vitamin E, including all clinical trial data and several large observational studies, CRN agrees with the Institute of Medicine in finding vitamin E supplements safe at levels of at least up to 1,000 mg (1,600 IU) for normal, healthy adults. The meta-analysis provides no convincing evidence to the contrary."[6]

Susan Finn, R.D. is the former president of the American Dietetic Association. She said, "This study inappropriately created confusion and fear…" She also said that "consumers shouldn't be frightened off from vitamin E in recommended doses by this one study."[7]

Dr. Jeffrey Blumberg, a professor of nutrition at Tufts University said there are "dozens of studies involving millions of people that show vitamin E supplementation can be beneficial and completely safe".[8]

Dr. Ronald Watson is a professor at the College of Public Health and School of Medicine at the University of Arizona. He is also the editor of an encyclopedia on vitamin E. He said, "We have carefully reviewed almost 100 articles about vitamin E, its benefits, activity, etc. There is almost no evidence of toxicity or adverse effects in doses used by the average American. The huge amount of data and studies on vitamin E suggest that it should be considered to promote health."[9]

Dr. Maret Traber is a vitamin E expert at the Linus Pauling Institute at Oregon State University. She was asked if people should continue taking vitamin E. Her answer, "absolutely yes."[10]

The Criticism Is Far and Wide

I've just given you a small sample of published statements made by both mainstream and alternative health experts. But I think you get the idea. For once, I agree with them all. Even the *most* mainstream agree with me—this study is wrong. And vitamin E is NOT harmful. There's just *so* much evidence of its benefits, gathered by studying millions of people, for so many years, even the mainstream knows about it!

Food Sources Of Vitamin E

You need to take a supplement to get the proper amount of vitamin E for benefiting your health. It's just impossible to eat *enough* vitamin E rich foods in one day to get an adequate amount.

But here are some good food sources:

Food	**Serving**	**Vitamin E IU's**
Almonds	1 ounce	6.7
Hazelnuts	1 ounce	6.7
Sweet potatoes	1 medium	5.9
Safflower oil	1 tablespoon	4.6
Peanut butter	1 tablespoon	3.0
Avocados	1 medium	2.3
Mangos	1 medium	2.3
Asparagus	4 spears	1.9

Maybe The Butler Did It (Because Vitamin E Did NOT)
This study is so flawed, it would be more intelligent to conclude that *The Butler* did it, than vitamin E. This study and the media's coverage of it, serves as yet another "wake up call," to question what you hear from the mainstream. Especially when it comes to information on natural healing.

I hope I have been helpful in clearing up the confusion surrounding this wonderful nutrient. Bringing you information that educates you about your good health is my commitment to you. So stay informed. It could save your life.

To Your Good Health,
Al Sears, MD

3010 words 57.5 reading ease 8.1 grade level

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