

Vitamin C - What really does into it?

Vitamin C - What really does into it? The Vitamin C you bought on the shelf doesn't come from an orange. As a matter of fact it doesn't come from a grapefruit, or any sort of fruit at all. It's a chemically refined part of corn starch, made in a lab. Surprised? I was, until I started researching what actually went into the supplements on the shelf. A quick survey of my local supermarket vitamin C supplements revealed that they were stuffed with sweeteners, fillers and industrial "flow agents" used in making paints and PVC piping. Why is this happening? In a word - money. Big Business Vitamin C production is big business - It's the most widely used supplement in the world today (1) and a quick search brought up over 122,851 research studies (2) related to its use. Its benefits range from helping the immune system to wound healing, the formation of antistress hormones and it's the best known antioxidant that is required for over 300 metabolic reactions in the body. With such a stellar resume, no wonder it's a best seller. The one thing you should worry about is what's being sold. Whole Food Vitamins The vitamin C on the market today is in the form of ascorbic acid, which is refined from corn starch in a lab. There is not necessarily a problem with that, since ascorbic acid is widely identified as the key active ingredient in vitamin C. The problem is that ascorbic acid is not the only active ingredient in vitamin C, even though it's sold as the complete vitamin. Naturally occurring vitamin C also contains rutin (a bioflavonoid), organic copper and other antioxidants that may interact with the ascorbic acid to make it more effective. Science aside, it's time for a little common sense. Which is likely to be more effective in your body, a chemical isolate or a natural compound that has been around for thousands of years? A much better option is to choose vitamins from a whole food source. These supplements are produced from real fruits and vegetables in their natural state and are generally subject to less processing than other forms of vitamins. Unfortunately, choosing whole food vitamins is only part of the solution because of the chemicals that go into making the vitamin later on. Sweet Tooth? A quick survey of local supermarket vitamin C brought up a staggering array of unnecessary chemical additions to the supplements. Just among our first 9 products that we surveyed we found the sweeteners sorbitol, mannitol and aspartame in large amounts in the ingredients list. How do we know they were in large amounts? According to the Food Standards Agency (3), items must be listed in volume descending order at the mixing bowl stage of production. What this means in plain English is that the more of an ingredient you put in, the closer to the top of the ingredients list it has to go. The sweeteners we found were all near the top of the list. Filling in the Gaps Another major item we found near the top of the ingredients list was maltodextrin. Maltodextrin is a complex carbohydrate that metabolises directly into glucose. Other than acting as a source of carbohydrates, it does not add nutritional value to a supplement. Presumably, if you are taking a vitamin C supplement you are looking for vitamin C, not a carbohydrate. So why do the manufacturer's add it into their supplements? Back to our old theme - money. Natural ingredients that add nutritional value tend to be expensive, so the companies add in "fillers" like maltodextrin to bulk up the product and make the capsules or tablets bigger so we think we are getting better value for money. Filler materials however, are cheap. Two pounds sterling of maltodextrin will make approximately 1600 tablets - it makes the actual ingredients go a long way. Unfortunately, it doesn't give you good value for money. Magnesium Stearate Yet another useless additive that we found is magnesium stearate. It's also known as magnesium salt and is the result of refining animal cartilage. Most often in supplements, the source is beef. Manufacturers use magnesium stearate as a filler material and as a flow agent, a two-for-one of nasty chemical additives. Imagine for a moment a production machine for vitamins, with fruits and vegetables (if you are lucky) at one end and tablets coming out the other. Adding in fruits to a machine is like blending them together - really messy and most importantly, sticky. The manufacturers need to use a flow agent to make sure none of the ingredients stick to the machinery, especially at the speeds they are run at. (An average tablet machine can turn out 10,000 tablets an hour) So what's the problem? Magnesium stearate is listed as a hazardous substance by the UK and US governments and as such, needs to have an MSDS distributed for it by everyone who sells it. An MSDS is a Material Safety and Data Sheet which is a guide to the hazards of using the chemical it describes. One large manufacturer of Magnesium Stearate lists the hazards as follows (4): Acute Toxic Effects: Irritating to the skin and eyes on contact. Inhalation will cause irritation to the lungs and mucus membrane. Irritation to the eyes will cause watering and redness. Reddening, scaling, and itching are characteristics of skin inflammation. Follow safe industrial hygiene practices and always wear protective equipment when handling this compound. To their defense, they do mention if it is safe to ingest in their report. Here is their conclusion: To the best of our knowledge, the chemical, physical, and toxicological properties have not been thoroughly investigated for Magnesium Stearate. So they basically don't know if it's safe or not. Again, it's time for a common sense to kick in. If this product will irritate your eyes, skin and lungs, if you should wear protective clothing when handling it and they don't really know whether it's safe... Do you want to eat it? Summary - What to look out for In short, almost every one of the vitamin C supplements you can find on a store shelf are not made from real fruit at all, but from refined corn starch. They are also very likely to contain mostly sweeteners and fillers and also to contain Magnesium Stearate, a "flow agent" and filler material that may be harmful. Does this mean that there is a conspiracy from vitamin manufacturers everywhere to poison us with cheap chemicals? No. These chemicals may be safe after all, however they don't appear to know for sure. What is for sure is that if you buy a supplement that contains any of these items you are not getting good value for money. Your only defence is to Read the Label. Choose wisely. Jamieson Jackson write on supplements is a principal at Absolutely Pure (www.absolutelypure.com) a retailer of chemical free skincare products, cosmetics and supplements. References 1) Vitamin C in human health and disease is still a mystery? An Overview. Department of Biochemistry and Nutrition, Central Food Technological Research Institute, Mysore, 570 013, India 2) Scirus scientific info database 3) www.food.gov.uk 4) Hummel Croton Inc. MSDS sheet for Magnesium Stearate

About the Author

Mental health problems can affect anyone, rich or poor, young or old, shattering the lives of those affected and the lives of the people.

Source: <http://www.productsherbal.com>