

science news

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AND
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Linus Pauling, Ph.D.

VITAMIN C AND HEART DISEASE

Can vitamin C protect you, and how much should you take?

Heart disease and related diseases of the circulatory system are the main cause of death in the United States. Over one million people die of these diseases each year, and probably more than five million people now living are suffering from them in a significant way.

There is no doubt that heart disease is related to the diet. In the 1976 Congressional Hearings on the relation between diet and disease the nation's top health officer, Dr. Theodore Cooper (Assistant Secretary for Health in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare), stated that

"While scientists do not yet agree on the specific causal relationships, evidence is mounting and there appears to be general agreement that the kinds and amount of food and beverages we consume and the style of living common in our generally affluent, sedentary society may be the major factors associated with the cause of cancer, cardiovascular disease, and other chronic illnesses."

For about 25 years the major culprits in cardiovascular disease have been thought to be saturated fats,

cholesterol, and related fat-like substances (lipids). A tremendous campaign has been waged to promote diets with low cholesterol, low saturated fat, and increased polyunsaturated fat. Despite this campaign, the death rate from cardiovascular disease has remained constant during the last 25 years, and it now seems to be almost certain that the assumption that heart disease is caused by a high intake of saturated fats and cholesterol is wrong.

This development does not mean that diet is not important. A high intake of ordinary sugar greatly increases the incidence of cardiovascular disease (see "Sugar: Sweet and Dangerous" in *Executive Health*, Volume 9, Number 1, 1972). Moreover, much evidence has been gathered recently to show that cardiovascular disease can be controlled to a considerable extent by the proper use of vitamin C.

What is cardiovascular disease?

The general term cardiovascular disease comprises various diseases of the heart and blood vessels. Arterio-

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