

Vitamins

Vitamins are one of the nutrition we take from daily food. Similar to minerals, they maintain our body's normal metabolism and activities. Vitamins are indispensable but a tiny amount would be sufficient. There are two types of vitamins: water soluble and fat soluble. Except for special circumstances such as illness or absorption problem, a normal and balanced diet would provide sufficient vitamins. Excessive vitamins yield no benefits and may even lead to adverse consequences. A number of common misconceptions are listed as follows:

Misconception (1) Many parents are in the view that frequent vitamin intake promotes children's appetite, physical height, spirit and intelligence. There is indeed no proof on scientific grounds. On the contrary, long-term and excessive intake of vitamins A and D would lead to diseases and even major consequences such as hypertension and renal failure.

Misconception (2) Vitamin C prevents common cold or facilitates quick recovery from such disease. This has not been proved on medical grounds. However, long-time intake in a large dose may lead to kidney stone.

Misconception (3) It is believed that external use of vitamin E promotes skin beauty. Again, this has not been proved on medical grounds. On the contrary, it may lead to contact dermatitis.

As such, vitamins should not be taken in excessive amount; in particular, do not let children take excessive vitamin As and D.

Unbalanced diets would obviously lead to a deficit in vitamin absorption, and this poses a special concern to children. If in doubt, consult a doctor.

Alternatively, under special circumstances, the human body needs additional vitamin supplements. For example, pregnant or nursing women have an increased need of vitamin and smokers also have a greater need of vitamin C.

Many vitamin products are available in the market. The following points should be noted when buying and taking the products:

- (1) Read carefully the type and amount of vitamins contained in the product and see if it is suitable given the user's age and physical conditions.
- (2) Do not take more than the recommended daily dose.
- (3) Ask yourself questions like: What is the purpose of taking vitamins? Is there a genuine need to have an additional supplement? Or is it for a psychological comfort?
- (4) Vitamins should be stored as instructed to avoid the loss of effectiveness.
- (5) Before taking any vitamin over a long period, consult your doctor.

Indeed, we can normally obtain sufficient vitamins from a balanced diet and an additional supplement is not required. Similar to other medicines, vitamins should be stored properly to avoid accidents of mistaken consumption by children.