

# Vitamin C

Vitamin C is a water-soluble vitamin. Humans can't make their own vitamin C, so we have to get it from our diet. Vitamin C is required to make collagen (which is an essential component of connective tissue) and plays an important role in wound healing. Vitamin C is also an important antioxidant (which helps protect your cells from breaking down). Vitamin C plays a role in immune function and improves the absorption of plant-based iron into the blood.

It is estimated that up to 68% of people in Vietnam are not getting the right amount of vitamin C. The incidence of vitamin C deficiency in Vietnam is higher than in other countries in the region including Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia. Because vitamin C helps people to absorb plant-based iron into the blood, people who are deficient in vitamin C might also be at increased risk of iron-deficient anaemia.

## **Sources of Vitamin C:**

You should be able to get all the vitamin C that you need from your diet. Fruits and vegetables are the best sources of Vitamin C. Citrus fruits (oranges, lemons), tomatoes, and potatoes are some of the best sources of Vitamin C. It can also be found in red and green peppers, and spinach.



## **Vitamin C deficiency:**

One of the most well known diseases associated with vitamin C deficiency is scurvy. Symptoms of scurvy start about 3 months after stopping eating fresh fruit and vegetables. Scurvy was first identified when many countries like America and England were beginning to explore the world during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They would spend months on a boat with no access to fresh fruit and vegetables. The sailors started to develop symptoms like fatigue, inflammation of the gums, rash, joint pain, and poor wound healing. If not treated, scurvy can cause death. Other signs of vitamin C deficiency are skin that is easily bruised, dry hair and skin, mood changes and weight loss. It is very rare these days for anyone to be deficient in vitamin C, because it is readily available from fresh fruit and vegetables. People who are alcoholics are at risk, because they may not eat enough foods with vitamin C. Also, people who have gastrointestinal problems are at risk because they have difficulty absorbing vitamin C from their stomach.

