Twice-a-day dose of vitamin C may be key

By Leslie Miller
USA TODAY

If you believe in the antioxidant power of vitamin C, one dose a day may not be enough, a new study suggests.

Millions of Americans' poor vitamin C on the theory it may help prevent heart disease, cancer and diseases of aging.

But because the body eliminates even large doses in 12 hours — and few people in 16 hours — the only way to keep levels continuously up is to take 500 milligrams every 12 hours, says Roy Orndoff, a bioscience professor at Beloit College in Beloit, Wisc.

"If vitamin C really does work as an antioxidant, then taking a supplement once a day might be like wearing a window half the time," says Orndoff, whose findings are published in the journal "Aging," out this week.

Though many studies show excess vitamin C is excreted in urine, "nobody's ever thought to look at how much you have to take to keep it elevated," Orndoff says.

Ordoff says that Orndoff had students take varying amounts of vitamin C at different times and monitored their urine.

A 500-mg dose every 12 hours was needed to balance the blood just enough so there's a little bit leaking out all the time.

"If vitamin C had a recommended daily allowance of 60 mg, the last Nobel laureate Linus Pauling took 10,000 milligrams a day," Orndoff said.

He died last August at the age of 93.

It hasn't been proved that hose amounts C is beneficial. Notes the Food and Drug Administration's Elizabeth Yealey: "The controversy has been quite heart disease, maxiumum (saturation) is best."

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By Jack Kelley
USA TODAY

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