

Abstract

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Antioxidant vitamins and the prevention of coronary heart disease.

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BACKGROUND: Clinical use of antioxidant vitamin supplementation may help to prevent coronary heart disease (CHD). Epidemiologic studies find lower CHD morbidity and mortality in persons who consume larger quantities of antioxidants in foods or supplements. Clinical trials indicate that supplementation with certain nutrients is beneficial in reducing the incidence of CHD events.

SUMMARY: Recent studies show that supplementation with antioxidant vitamins E and C have benefits in CHD prevention; however, supplementation with beta-carotene may have deleterious effects and is not recommended. Current evidence suggests that patients with CHD would probably benefit from taking vitamin E in a dosage of 400 IU per day and vitamin C in a dosage of 500 to 1,000 mg per day. Clinicians may also want to consider vitamin supplementation for CHD prevention in high-risk patients. Folate lowers elevated homocysteine levels, but evidence for routine supplemental use does not yet exist. Other nutritional supplements are currently under investigation.

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