



Wellness Minute

Health Information You Can Use On Your Path To Wellness

Important Info On
COVID Prevention
And Protection

Vitamin A The "Anti-Infection" Nutrient

Vitamin A & Infections

“Vitamin A is essential for immune defense against infection of all kinds, both viral and bacterial.”

Do you think the most published cardiologist in the history of the world has the right to be heard on, “What went wrong with how we treated COVID?” We are talking about Dr. Peter McCullough, who has been outspoken on many, many podcasts and interviews. He believes that we should be treating people with COVID as soon as possible to limit the replication of the virus. Once the virus gets a foothold in our body, it can be trouble and as we know for some people, life threatening. Why did we wait until things got so bad that people had to go to the hospital?

Dr. McCullough’s believes that historians will look back and ask, “Why didn’t they treat early?” By now, we know that

lots of things could be used to reduce replication. In fact, Dr. Alex Vasquez, back in 2014, outlined the major nutrients to reduce viral contraction and replication in his book, Anti-Viral Nutrition. We have heard about many different immune supporting nutrients, but let’s focus on the power of vitamin A. By the way, vitamin A has been nicknamed the “anti-infection” vitamin because of the many roles it plays to support the immune system.

Did you know that most people do not have sufficient levels of vitamins and minerals for optimal health? This includes the nutrients needed for your immune system to function at peak performance. So, when trauma or infection hits, right off the bat, we are playing catch up

with limited resources. And if we add other factors like hypertension, diabetes, obesity, autoimmunity etc, we have additional drains on our already depleted cellular reserves or cellular bank account. In other words, when we are stressed, and particularly during acute infections and inflammation, there is a loss and catabolism of nutrients, particularly vitamin A.

A good friend and colleague, Dr. Alex Vasquez, who holds 3 different medical degrees, points out these areas to consider:

1. Many people have marginal or deficient vitamin A status, so their tanks are near empty at the start of the challenge. Some studies show 25-45% of people

have impaired ability to convert beta-carotene to vitamin A.

2. Increased metabolic demand of severe/acute infection utilizes or destroys vitamin A, exactly when it is needed.

3. Changes in liver and kidney function lead to increased urinary loss of vitamin A during inflammation and infection.

Let me emphasize that last point, “when people are acutely sick or inflamed, they actually lose vitamin A through their urine, thus making them increasingly vulnerable to both inflammation and infection.” Vitamin A is essential for: immune defense against infection of all kinds, both viral and bacterial. It is important for the maintenance of epithelial barriers to keep pathogens from getting into our blood.

It is also essential to balance inflammation providing protection against an excessive immune reaction commonly called the cytokine storm. In most cases it is the cytokine storm that kills people. As we’ve stated before, vitamin D is another nutrient that reduces and prevents the cytokine storm.

Vitamin A and iron are two nutrients that we can’t live without, but that have potential side effects if too much is taken. How much is too much? That depends on the person. In Italy, doctors gave 300,000 IU a day to cancer patients for 2 years with relatively no effects except for elevated liver enzyme called GGT and unexplained triglycerides. But everyone is different, and since the toxicity symptoms associated with Vitamin A are well known, we can be on the lookout for them and stop taking vitamin A if we experience them.

Symptoms for Vitamin A overload include headaches, fatigue, dry skin, weakness, nausea, blurred vision, bone pain, muscle aches, hair loss, chapped lips, increase in liver enzymes especially GGT, hypercalcemia or elevated triglycerides for no apparent reason.

Having said that, Vitamin A is very safe. Sure, we want to pay attention to how we feel and stop supplementing if there is concern. But side effects are very very rare. Just to give you an idea, it’s not unusual to give short bursts of high dose vitamin A to children. For example, the WHO suggests bonus doses of Vitamin A for measles. You can see a 2019 report on Medscape where they suggest two doses of 200,000 iu for children older than 1 year old. For children 6-12 months old they suggest 2 doses of 100,000 iu. So, it can be very effective but we don’t want to use it for a long time without supervision and vigilance.

The reality is that most people have multiple nutritional deficiencies, not simply that of vitamin A, and that these nutritional deficiencies all cause immunosuppression and exacerbation of infection. That’s the importance of trying to build sufficient cellular reserves before you get sick. And once you have an acute infection, add aggressive doses of the nutrients that support but do not exacerbate your immune system like vitamins A, D, C, selenium, zinc among others.

Ask your wellness clinician about specifics for you. I’m sure your doctor has their favorites. I started out referring to Dr. McCullough and how important it is to treat early for virus, not just COVID, but any virus. But I wanted to encourage you to invest in your health now, way before you experience colds or flu. Prevention is always the best medicine.