The "Ideal" Vitamin C Intake

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Eaton and Konner, in their magnificent and monumental report, outline the diet of our remote ancestors as a reference standard for modern human nutrition and a model for defense against certain so-called diseases of civilzation.[1]

Apropos vitamin C, they estimate from the mean ascorbic acid content of 27 vegetables consumed by recent hunter-gatherers that the mean vitamin C intake would have been 392.3 mg. per day in paleolithic diets.

We have been studying the "ideal" vitamin C intake based upon the hypothesis that relatively symptomless and signfree persons are healthier than those with clinical symptoms and signs. Therefore, the intake of such groups might well provide a basis for designating the "ideal" daily vitamin C consumption.

One thousand thirty-eight doctors and their spouses were evaluated in terms of daily reported vitamin C intake as judged from a food frequency questionnaire (including diet and supplementation). Clinical state was graded by the Cornell Medical Index Health Questionnaire (CMI). The CMI is a self-administered health questionnaire consisting of 19 questions. Each question is answered yes or no. The questions are phrased so that affirmative answers indicate pathology. The clinical findings here reported are the total number of yes answers.(CMI score).

Line 1 (Table) shows the daily vitamin C consumption of the entire group. The CMI spread from 0 to 125 with a mean of 15.9. The daily reported vitamin C intake ranged from 15 to 1120 mg. with a mean of 327 mg. per day.

Deleting those with more than 30 complaints (line 2) nets a vitamin C intake of 335 mg. In those with fewer than 15 problems (line 3), the C consumption is 349 mg.

It is noteworthy that Eaton and Konner (from their study of primitive man) come up with 392 mg; from our investigation of modern man, we find 410 mg, — a matter of 4% difference!

1. Eaton, SB, Konner, M.: Paleolithic nutrition: a consideration of its nature and current implications. N. Engl. J. Med. 312:283-288,1985.

2. Cheraskin, E., Ringsdorf, W.M. Jr, Medford, FH.: The "ideal" daily vitamin C intake. J. Med. Assoc. State Ala. 12:39-40. 1977.

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TABLE

The "ideal" vitamin C intake

	Sample Size	CMI Range	Mean	Vitamin C (mg.) Range	Mean
1. entire sample	1038	0-125	15.9	15-1120	327
2. CMI < 30	912	0- 29	12.4	41-1120	335
3. CMI < 15	581	0- 14	7.9	41-1120	349
4. CMI < 5	113	0- 4	2.8	49-1120	376
5. CMI < 4	73	0- 3	2.1	104- 736	383
6. CMI < 3	46	0- 2	1.5	108- 736	389
7. CMI < 2	16	0- 1	0.6	116- 719	390
8. CMI < 0	6	0	0.0	120- 719	410