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# Vitamin E in Health and Disease

Interactions, Diseases and Health Aspects

Edited by Pınar Erkekoglu and Júlia Scherer Santos





Vitamin E in Health and Disease - Interactions, Diseases and Health Aspects

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#### Contributors

Adnan Mansour Jasim, Mohammed Jasim Jawad, Israel Ehizuelen Ebhohimen, Owen Norma Izevbigie, Taiwo Stephen Okanlawon, Augustine Ododo Augustine Osagie, Claudineia Aparecida Sales de Oliveira Pinto, André Rolim Baby, Maria Valéria Robles Velasco, Thamires Batello Freire, Renata Miliani Martinez, Tércio Elyan Azevedo Azevedo Martins, Ramu Govindan, Tilak Meenakshisundaram, Navanita Sivaramakumar, Duraiswamy Basavan, Dhanabal Palanisamy, Podila Naresh, Mariyappan Kowsalya, Prasanna Rajeshkumar Mohan, Thangavel Velmurugan, Kattagounder Govindaraj Sudha, Saheb Ali, Vegim Zhaku, Nexhbedin Beadini, Sheqibe Beadini, Ashok Agarwal, Renata Finelli, Ralf Henkel, Sava Micic, Samia Ben Mansour-Gueddes, Dhouha Saidana-Naija, Ahmad Farouk Musa, Miroslava Kačániová, Marianna Schwarzová, Katarína Fatrcová-Šrámková, Eva Tvrdá, Makhlouf Chaalal, Siham Ydjedd, Mohd Aftab Aftab Siddiqui, Md. Faheem Haider, Farogh Ahsan, Asad Ali, Usama Ahmad, Lyudmyla P. Shvachko, Michael Zavelevych, Daniil Gluzman, Gennadii Telegeev, Júlia Scherer Santos, Guilherme Diniz Tavares, Thaís Nogueira Barradas

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### Chapter 6

## Role of Vitamin E in Pregnancy

Mohd Aftab Siddiqui, Usama Ahmad, Asad Ali, Farogh Ahsan and Md. Faheem Haider

### Abstract

Vitamins play important roles in female health. They are essential for many functions, including menstruation and ovulation, oocyte (egg) quality and maturation. Vitamin E was first discovered in 1922 as a substance necessary for reproduction. It has become widely known as a powerful lipid-soluble antioxidant. There are various reports on the benefits of vitamin E on health in general. Vitamin E helps your body create and maintain red blood cells, healthy skin, eyes and strengthens your natural immune system. However, despite it being initially discovered as a vitamin necessary for reproduction, to date studies relating to its effects in this area are lacking. Vitamin E supplementation may help reduce the risk of pregnancy complications involving oxidative stress, such as pre-eclampsia. This chapter is written to provide a review of the known roles of vitamin E in pregnancy.

Keywords: Vitamin E, Pregnancy, Oxidative stress, Tocopherol

### 1. Introduction

Vitamin E is an important micronutrient in the human body. Vitamin E maintains various body functions. It plays a very important role in maternal health and child development [1]. Vitamin E is an essential fat-soluble micronutrient for higher mammals and functions as an antioxidant for lipids [2]. American scientists Herbert McLean Evans and Katherine Scott Bishop discovered vitamin E in 1922. Vitamin E is an essential lipid-soluble vitamin. It was initially denoted as an "antisterility factor X" that was necessary for reproduction. The vital role of vitamin E in reproduction was first investigated 80 years ago [3]. It was named according to a consecutive alphabetical order preceded by the discovery of vitamins A to D. Later vitamin E was called alpha-tocopherol, according to the Greek term "tokos" childbirth, "phero" to bear, and -ol indicating alcohol. Vitamin E is also called the "protecting vitamin" [4]. The amount of vitamin E is determined by age. For adults, the safest dose of vitamin E supplements is 1,500 IU/day for natural forms and 1,000 IU/day for man-made (synthetic) forms. Table 1 shows the average daily prescribed doses as determined by the Food and Nutrition Board of the Institute of Medicine [5–7].

Some vitamin E containing foods include wheat, rice bran, barley, oat, coconut, palm, and annatto [8–9]. Other sources include rye, amaranth, walnut, hazelnut, poppy, sunflower, maize and the seeds of grape and pumpkins [10]. The richest sources are nuts, spinach, whole grains, olive oil, and sunflower oil [11]. Vitamin E now refers to eight different isoforms that belong to two categories, four saturated analogues ( $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ ,  $\gamma$ , and  $\delta$ ) called tocopherols and four unsaturated analogues