

A Long-Term Survival Guide – Survival Vitamin C:

In any long-term survival crisis, you must have a source of Vitamin C, or you will get sick and die. All humans need a steady intake of Vitamin C to remain healthy, because our bodies can't store it. Even if you have the foresight to store a supply of multi-vitamins, they will eventually be used up.



Dwarf citrus tree varieties include lemons, limes, and mandarin oranges.

Lack of Vitamin C causes a condition called Scurvy. Symptoms of scurvy include liver spots on the skin, spongy gums, and bleeding from all mucous membranes. The spots form mostly on the thighs and legs, and a person with scurvy looks pale, feels depressed, and has extremely low energy. In advanced scurvy, wounds simply will not heal, your body can't fight off infection, your teeth fall out, and you eventually die.

Most animals make their own Vitamin C in their bodies, so eating animal livers is one way to get the vitamin, but muscle tissue contains a lot less of it. Many edible plants contain Vitamin C, but different plants have different amounts. A balanced diet that includes plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables guarantees that you will get enough Vitamin C, but what do you do in a long-term survival situation?



Strawberry fruits contain Vitamin C, but tea from the leaves contain several times as much.

The first solution is to grow dwarf citrus trees, in large plant pots. You can buy dwarf lemon trees, lime trees, and mandarin orange trees at most nurseries, or Home Depots, and they will produce tiny fruits full of Vitamin C. Dwarf plants do well indoors, and can be placed outside in warm weather. You may want to acquire several of these tiny fruit trees, for each person at your survival retreat.

A second solution uses another plant that is high in Vitamin C, the strawberry plant. Strawberries are easy to acquire, and grow well in pots, or garden beds. Strawberries have Vitamin C in them, but you can get even more of the vitamin from the fresh strawberry leaves, by making strawberry leaf tea. The leaves should be picked and used while they are fresh. Just chop up a handful of fresh green strawberry leaves, and steep them in a pot of almost-boiling water.



Sprouts contain some Vitamin C, and can be made using commercial or improvised sprouters.

The trick with strawberry plants is to never use half-dead, wilted-looking leaves, because the drying leaves will make you sick, but fresh green leaves will not (the leaves change chemistry as they dry). Completely dry leaves can be used as tea leaves, but I prefer the fresh kind. (Avoid strawberry leaf tea, if you are allergic to strawberry fruits.)

A third way to get Vitamin C is by planning to grow your own garden vegetables, and to make your own sprouts from alfalfa and wheat seeds, and to plant (non-citrus) fruit trees, which will survive cold weather. This plan requires a safe survival refuge with room to grow crops, a supply of wheat and other sprouting seeds, and the advance purchase of fruit tree seedlings.



Most whole grains can be sprouted to provide a source of vitamins, including Vitamin C.

A fourth way to get your Vitamin C is to trap wild game for the livers, and to harvest wild fruits and berries, which can be concentrated into fruit leathers.

A fifth way to get survival Vitamin C is from Pine Tree needles. Pine needles contain lots of the vitamin, and can also be made into a tea. Chop up a handful of fresh pine needles, and steep them in a pot of not-quite-boiling water. Pine needle tea has a slightly sweet taste, but if you boil the water with the needles in it, you will get a drink that tastes like turpentine. Don't use any evergreens except pines, because some kinds, like the yew tree, are poisonous.



Trapping wild game is one way to obtain liver, which is rich in Vitamin C.

Be sure to carefully strain these teas, as the strawberry leaves and pine needles are not digestible, and should not be swallowed. Pine needles also have sharp pointy ends, which could stick in your throat, if you accidentally ingested one, so please be careful.



A survival refuge should have garden space and fruit trees, to provide a source of vitamins.

There is a potential problem with Pine Needle Tea, that you should be aware of. Pine needle tea can cause women to have spontaneous abortions, so do not drink it, if pregnant. Ponderosa pine was often used by Native Americans as a form of birth control, as this variety of pine seems to have the most abortion-inducing effect. (But if you want a natural form of birth control, this is one option.)



Pines are easy to identify. Chop up the needles and steep, for a Vitamin C tea.

Please note that the amount of Vitamin C intake needed to fight off infections, or to allow the body to repair large amounts of damaged tissue (such as from burns or wounds), is much higher than the low daily dose needed to avoid or cure scurvy, so always ingest more when you are sick or injured.