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## 14. Water-soluble vitamins

*C. H. Halsted*

VITAMIN C

**History**

### **Therapeutic uses and toxicity**

Of all the vitamins, ascorbic acid is probably the most controversial because it is claimed, on the basis of in-vitro or animal experimentation but not clinical studies, to have wide-ranging effects. When the double Nobel Prize winner Pauling published his book *Vitamin C and the common cold* (1970) he transformed the public's attitudes to vitamin C by claiming that large daily doses of vitamin C reduced the likelihood of contracting the common cold. The popularity of this concept prompted at least 14 clinical trials, which failed to show an effect of vitamin C (Chalmers 1975), yet large segments of the population believe that daily vitamin C in amounts far exceeding the RDA is essential to maintain health (Council on Scientific Affairs 1987).

Council on Scientific Affairs, American Medical Association  
1987 Vitamin preparations as dietary supplements and  
therapeutic agents. *Journal of the American Medical  
Association* 257: 1929–1936

Chalmers TC 1975 Effects of ascorbic acid on the common  
cold: an evaluation of the evidence. *American Journal of  
Medicine* 58: 532–536

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# **Human Nutrition and Dietetics**

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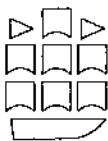
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