



Hepatoprotective Effect of Vitamin C (Ascorbic Acid)

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ABSTRACT

Human and animal studies have shown that some drugs and chemical agents have potential hepatotoxic effects. The hepatotoxic effect of drugs and some chemical agents is reported to be associated with the generation of reactive oxygen species (ROS). These ROS are reported to be associated with lipid peroxidation in the liver. This mechanism has led to continuous evaluation of the hepatoprotective effect of antioxidants in humans and animals. Among the antioxidants been evaluated is vitamin C which is a water soluble antioxidant. Reports have linked vitamin C with hepatoprotective property in animals and humans. Its synergistic hepatoprotective effect with other antioxidants was also reported. Due to these reports a comprehensive literature review on the hepatoprotective property of vitamin C in humans and animals was performed. It was observed that vitamin C exhibited a reputable hepatoprotective effect in humans and animals. Research showed that vitamin C inhibited hepatotoxicity induced by drugs, heavy metals, organophosphate insecticides and some chemical agents. Vitamin C was reported to normalize levels of serum alanine aminotransferase, aspartate aminotransferase, gamma glutamine, alkaline phosphatase, lactate dehydrogenase and malondialdehyde and serum bilirubin in intoxicated animals. It potentiates the activities of free radical scavengers, superoxide dimutase, and catalase glutathione peroxidase thereby preventing microsomal lipid peroxidation, liver fibrosis, liver necrosis and hepatic inflammation. In humans vitamin C was reported to be beneficial in non alcoholic steatohepatitis and in patients with fatty liver disease. Hepatoprotective property of vitamin C is attributed to its antioxidant property. Vitamin C (ascorbic acid) which is a major water-soluble antioxidant is believed to decrease lipid peroxidation either directly or indirectly by regenerating vitamin E. Vitamin C is an important free radical scavenger in extracellular fluids, trapping radicals and protecting biomembranes from peroxide damage. Vitamin C effectively scavenges singlet oxygen, superoxide, hydroxyl, water soluble peroxy radical and hypochlorous acid. It is also reported to be an excellent source of electrons and therefore can donate electrons to free radicals such as hydroxyl and super oxide radicals and quench their activity. Vitamin C is an essential co-factor involved in many biochemical functions and acts as an electron donor or reducing agent. In this review it is observed that vitamin C has hepatoprotective effect which increases when co administered with other agents precisely antioxidants.

KEYWORDS

Vitamin C; Hepatoprotection; Antioxidant

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