

Did you know that the average person takes ten to 20 breaths per minute? The lungs are a pair of organs responsible for inhaling fresh air to oxygenate your cells and exhaling waste gas (i.e., carbon dioxide). According to a 2017 report published in *The Lancet Respiratory Medicine*, approximately 545 million people globally are affected by a chronic lung condition, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and asthma–that’s a nearly 40% increase since 1990.

Promote healthy lung function by exercising regularly, eating a healthy antioxidant-rich diet, avoiding cigarettes and secondhand smoke, and limiting exposure to outdoor pollution. Additionally, when recommended by your integrative healthcare practitioner, the supplement ingredients outlined below may help support your respiratory health.

**The following are some of the top ingredients recommended on Fullscript for respiratory health.**

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**Vitamin C**

Vitamin C, or ascorbic acid, is found in many dietary sources, including citrus fruits, kiwifruit, and bell peppers. Vitamin C provides antioxidant properties, which may lower inflammation. Although uncommon, vitamin C deficiency is associated with a greater risk for developing asthma. Asthma and COPD symptoms, such as wheezing, phlegm production, and shortness of breath, may decrease with an adequate intake of vitamin C. In COPD-induced mice, vitamin C supplementation increased lung collagen, a major component of healthy lung tissue.

The recommended dietary allowances (RDAs) for vitamin C are:

* Birth to 6 months: 40 mg
* Infants 7-12 months: 50 mg
* Children 1-3 years: 15 mg
* Children 4-8 years: 25 mg
* Children 9-13 years: 45 mg
* Boys 14-18 years: 75 mg
* Girls 14-18 years: 65 mg
* Adult men: 90 mg
* Adult women: 75 mg

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**Vitamin D**

Vitamin D is a fat-soluble vitamin that is produced by the body with sun exposure and present in limited foods, including red meat, oily fish (e.g., salmon, sardines), and egg yolks. Consuming inadequate amounts of vitamin D-rich foods or spending too much time indoors can increase your risk of vitamin D deficiency. Vitamin D deficiency is associated with an increased incidence of chronic respiratory conditions, such as COPD. In conditions like COPD, inflammation of our airways is triggered by our immune cells.

Reports indicate that higher levels of vitamin D are associated with better lung function, and that the majority of individuals with COPD are vitamin D deficient; therefore, supplementation is suggested. The RDA for vitamin D is 600 IU per day for individuals between the ages of one to 70 and 800 IU per day for those 71 and older.

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**Vitamin E**

Vitamin E (alpha-tocopherol), found in various dietary sources such as wheat germ, sunflower seeds, almonds, and spinach, is a fat-soluble vitamin that acts as an antioxidant in the body, scavenging free radicals that can damage cells. Research has indicated that dietary and supplemental intake of vitamin E improves measures of lung function and may decrease the risk of developing lung cancer. Further research has demonstrated that vitamin E supplementation improves serum levels of vitamin E and may improve clinical manifestations of asthma in children. For individuals over the age of 14, the RDA for vitamin E is 15 mg per day.

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**Omega-3 fatty acids**

Omega-3 fatty acids include alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), which is primarily found in plant oils (e.g., canola oil, flaxseed oil), and eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), which are primarily found in fatty fish (e.g., salmon, tuna). Omega-3 fatty acids act as anti-inflammatory molecules, which may be why those with COPD who regularly consume omega-3 fatty acids have reported that they have a better health-related quality of life and fewer COPD symptoms.

Omega-3s are essential fatty acids meaning they can’t be produced internally and must be acquired through dietary or supplement sources. The RDA for ALA is 1.6 g per day for adult males and 1.1 g for adult females. There is no official RDA for DHA or EPA, but the World Health Organization (WHO) suggests 200 to 250 mg per day for healthy adults. Since dietary intake of ALA is generally much higher than EPA/DHA, most omega-3 supplements are focused on providing DHA and EPA.

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**Curcumin**

Curcumin, a yellow compound found in the turmeric plant (*Curcuma longa*), has been found to demonstrate anti-inflammatory and antioxidant activities. Research suggests that dietary and supplemental curcumin intake may play a protective role in several chronic inflammatory lung conditions, such as COPD and asthma. According to a 2012 study, smokers who consumed a curcumin-rich curry meal at least once per month experienced improved pulmonary function nearly equivalent to that of non-smokers.

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