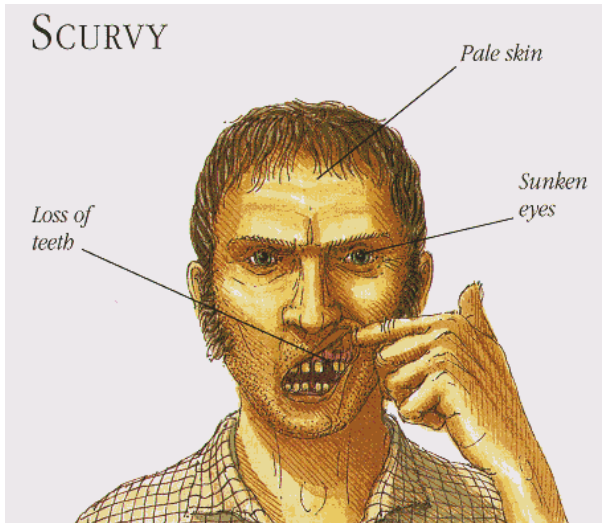


Scurvy



Scurvy is a disease caused by a diet that lacks vitamin C (ascorbic acid). Patients develop anemia, debility, exhaustion, edema (swelling) in some parts of the body, and sometimes ulceration of the gums and loss of teeth.

Scurvy commonly is associated with sailors in the 16th to 18th centuries who navigated long voyages without enough vitamin C and frequently perished from the condition. Modern cases of scurvy are extremely rare.

Though scurvy is a very rare disease, it still occurs in some patients - usually elderly people, alcoholics, or those that live on a diet devoid of fresh fruits and vegetables.

Similarly, infants or children who are on special or poor

diets for any number of economic or social reasons may be prone to scurvy.

Scurvy symptoms may begin with appetite loss, poor weight gain, diarrhea, rapid breathing, fever, irritability, tenderness and discomfort in legs, swelling over long bones, bleeding (hemorrhaging), and feelings of paralysis.

As the disease progresses, a scurvy victim may present bleeding of the gums, loosened teeth, petechial hemorrhage of the skin and mucous membranes (a tiny pinpoint red mark), bleeding in the eye, proptosis of the eyeball (protruding eye), costochondral beading (beading of the cartilage between joints), hyperkeratosis (a skin disorder), corkscrew hair, and sicca syndrome (an auto-immune disease affecting connective tissue).

Scurvy is treated by providing the patient with vitamin C, administered either orally or via injection. Orange juice usually functions as an effective dietary remedy, but specific vitamin supplements are also known to be effective.

Author: Peter Crosta

Original article date: 29th
June 2009.

Article updated 23rd
January 2013.

Copyright: Medical News
Today

132 Gums in scurvy. The gums are blue-red and grossly swollen in this patient with severe scurvy. The earliest changes are swelling of the interdental papillae and tendency to bleed easily. Lesions occur only in relation to teeth and so in young infants and edentulous adults they are

132



absent. In advanced cases there is usually an element of infection and antibiotics as well as vitamin C are required for healing.

133 Very advanced gum lesions in scurvy.

133

