Vitamin C might improve health, but it can't replace exercise

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JOHN F. KENNEDY once said, "There are risks and costs to a program of action, but they are far less than the long-range risks and costs of comfortable inaction." These words certainly apply to a new study of obese people that found daily supplementation of vitamin C (500 mg per day, time-released) reduces circulatory constriction in small blood vessels as much as walking does.

While that's good news for obese (and overweight) folks who are trying to get healthier, taking that much vitamin C should be part of a strategy to get you on the road to better health. It's NOT a magic pill that encourages comfortable inaction. And it doesn't give someone who is overweight a reason to skip exercise or to eat unhealthy foods.

True, sometimes people who are overweight or obese have a hard time exercising. Exercising with extra baggage is like trying to catch a connecting flight at O'Hare 50 gates away, loaded down with carry-ons. You hope it will happen, but ... So, if you're overweight and want to get on that healthy plane, make this C-onnection.

Talk to your doctor about increasing your daily dose of vitamin C (for some folks, it may trigger kidney stones or blood-clotting problems). Avoid the Five Food Felons (all trans and most sat fats, all added sugars and syrups, and processed grains). Start a walking program (with pedometer and a buddy) headed for 10,000 steps a day. And enjoy the vitamin C-packed deliciousness of papaya, bell peppers, broccoli, strawberries and pineapple.

Mehmet Oz, M.D., is host of "The Dr. Oz Show," and Mike Roizen, M.D., is chief wellness officer and chairman of Wellness Institute at Cleveland Clinic. To live your healthiest, tune into "The Dr. Oz Show" or visit www.sharecare.com.