



IVACG Policy Statement

on Vitamin A Status and

Childhood Mortality

In 1989, the Steering Committee of the International Vitamin A Consultative Group (IVACG) released an “interim” statement recognizing the importance of adequate vitamin A status for preventing childhood blindness and reducing childhood morbidity and mortality. That statement was based on results of a small number of completed studies. Since that time, numerous definitive trials have been completed and published. These additional data confirm IVACG’s interim statement. As a result, the IVACG Steering Committee reaffirms its original conclusions:

- Adequate vitamin A status prevents nutritional blindness and contributes significantly to child health and survival.
- Vitamin A plays an important role in preventing nutritional blindness and in

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reducing childhood morbidity and mortality, from mid-infancy through the early school-age years, particularly from measles and diarrhea. The exact mechanism(s) by which it has these effects are unclear, but they undoubtedly relate to normal differentiation of epithelial cells and related structures and the ability to mount an effective immune response.

- The impact of improved vitamin A nutrition varies with the severity of existing vitamin A deficiency and the contributions of other ecological factors.
- It is therefore imperative to improve the diet and employ other approaches as appropriate for improving vitamin A nutritional status where it is deficient.

The IVACG Steering Committee hopes that this statement will be useful in the process of formulating country and regional policies and programs to control and combat vitamin A deficiency.

Further Reading

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Established in 1975, the International Vitamin A Consultative Group (IVACG) guides international activities for reducing vitamin A deficiency in the world. IVACG concentrates its efforts on stimulating and disseminating new knowledge, translating that new knowledge to assist others in its practical application, and providing authoritative policy statements and recommendations that others can use to develop appropriate prevention and control programs.

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