

Hope & Healing

Vitamins Buying and Taking Vitamins

A heart at peace gives life to the body — Proverbs 14:30

Introduction

Doctors are often asked, "Do I need to take vitamins?"

The answer is obvious but confusing because of all there is in the news about vitamins. Vitamins, by definition, are chemicals, taken orally in microscopic amounts, that are required for life to go on.

The real question is whether we need to take vitamins in addition to those in the food we eat.

It depends on what one eats.

If there is a typical American diet it might be made up of 45% fat, 15% sugar, and 15% white flour, which added together, equals 70% of our calories, containing few vitamins and minerals. This means that only 30% of our food must supply 100% of nutrition.

If you're eating 2,000 calories a day from the diet just described, 1,400 of them are empty. You can't get adequate vitamins and minerals from the remaining 600 calories a day.

And, if you are a social drinker, you add another 10% of empty calories to your total, expecting to get adequate vitamins and minerals from 20% of your food.

If you're eating 1,000 calories a day to lose weight, you can't get enough vitamins and minerals because there are too few calories. When calories fall below about 1,700 a day for a man and 1,200 a day for women, the liver burns vitamins as energy, producing a vitamin deficiency.

Even a carefully maintained diet, supplemented with the most nutritious-sounding ingredients, will be vitamin deficient if the calories are too low.

Most researchers agree that all of us could get plenty of vitamins and minerals if we would eat properly. To answer the initial question, "Do I need to take vitamins?" The answer is yes. Eat

enough food of high quality and you will get plenty of vitamins. Fruits and vegetables contain not just antioxidants, but fiber and other substances that are thought to reduce the risk of heart disease and cancer.

What To Take

Vitamins are not regulated to the degree that prescription or some over-the-counter medications are. Therefore, vitamin companies can make claims about the benefits of their vitamins when there may be little or no actual evidence. Several large randomized trials have been completed in 2006 and 2007 that have helped to clarify the evidence about the benefits of vitamins. Overall, vitamin supplementation has limited evidence showing any benefit and surprisingly some studies have shown that certain vitamins may actually increase disease and death.

Common Vitamin Supplements

Folic Acid

Folic Acid is found in green leafy vegetables, fruits, nuts, grains, cereals, and meats. It is beneficial to prevent spinal cord defects in fetuses so women of childbearing age should take 400mg and women trying to conceive should take 800mg.

There is no evidence to support the use of Folic Acid in reducing cancers or decreasing cardiovascular disease.

Vitamin D

Deficiency of Vitamin D appears to be common due to lack of adequate intake and limited exposure to sunlight

(which promotes Vitamin D absorption). Vitamin D promotes good bone and muscle health by enhancing calcium absorption. Benefits of Vitamin D include decreased rates of osteoporosis and fractures and decreased risks of falls in the elderly through improved muscle strength. Some trials have shown that Vitamin D leads to a reduction in overall death rates. In older adults, the typical recommended dose is at least 800 IU daily. Doses below 2000 IU per day rarely cause toxicity. Doctors can now measure Vitamin D levels and advise patients about the correct amount of supplementation they need.

Antioxidants

The antioxidants include Vitamin A (made up of retinol and beta-carotene), Vitamin C, and Vitamin E. These vitamins have been the focus of intense study because of their ability to degrade free radicals which are toxic to bodily tissues. Most antioxidant vitamins are found in fruits and vegetables. Studies have consistently shown that diets rich in fruits and vegetables lead to a reduction in cancer and cardiovascular disease. Therefore, it has been hypothesized that additional supplementation with antioxidant vitamins should lead to a further reduction in health problems. However, randomized clinical trials looking at using antioxidant vitamins to reduce the risk of developing cancer or cardiovascular disease have found no or limited benefit, while, in some studies individuals taking higher doses of certain vitamins tend to have higher rates of overall death. These study results have led to recommendations limiting antioxidant supplementation. Here are some recommendations about individual antioxidant supplements.

Vitamin A - Studies looking at

Vitamin A for cancer reduction have shown a slight reduction in breast cancer rates, but, there also appears to be a significant increase in lung cancer and prostate cancer. Vitamin A has shown no benefit in treating or preventing heart disease. Vitamin A intake is a risk factor for development of osteoporosis and fractures. Vitamin A can decrease the development of cataracts in smokers, but, with the increased risk of lung cancer it is hard to recommend.

Vitamin C - Studies looking at prevention of cancer, heart disease, and eye disease have found no overall benefit other than a small reduction in the formation of cataracts. There are mixed results for Vitamin C and prevention of colds with some studies showing a small reduction in the frequency of colds while others showing no benefit. Studies have failed to show any benefit in treating colds with Vitamin C.

Vitamin E - Studies looking at Vitamin E supplementation for cancer prevention have shown mixed results. Some studies have shown a reduction in prostate and lung cancer with 50 IU to 400IU of Vitamin E. However, other studies have shown no overall benefit in reducing cancers. Two studies in early 2009 showed no benefit for Vitamin E in prostate cancer prevention.

It was initially believed that the strong antioxidant properties of Vitamin E would lead to a reduction in heart disease. However, when well designed studies were performed, it was revealed that Vitamin E supplementation actually increased the risk of heart disease and heart failure. It has also been shown that there is no benefit with Vitamin E in stroke reduction.

Of great concern is the finding that higher doses of Vitamin E (>400 IU daily) cause an increase in overall death and the greater the dose, the higher the death rate.

Overall, Vitamin E supplementation probably does not decrease the risk of prostate and lung cancer at low doses. Also, it is difficult to recommend routine supplementation due to the finding of higher rates of heart disease and an

increase in overall mortality, especially with higher doses.

B Vitamins _____ **Vitamins B6 and B2 (riboflavin) -**

Studies have failed to show any significant benefit of Vitamin B supplementation for prevention of cancer or heart disease in individuals who eat a typical American diet.

Vitamin B12 - This is needed to maintain good functioning of the nervous system and for production of blood cells. In young, healthy individuals who eat a typical American diet the risk of Vitamin B12 deficiency is low. However, in the elderly, where absorption of Vitamin B12 is lower, a deficiency state can develop. It is currently recommended that elderly patients take 6 micrograms of Vitamin B12 daily. If a doctor suspects severe Vitamin B12 deficiency he or she can order a B12 level to see if higher doses are needed.

Multivitamins _____

These have low doses of many different vitamin components (usually one Daily Value of each). They are probably safe for most adults, although, there is no evidence of any overall benefit.

Summary _____

Vitamins ARE important. However, the belief that "if a little is good, a lot is better" does not apply to Vitamin supplementation. When scientifically studied, most vitamin supplementation has no proven health benefits and in higher doses actually causes harm by increasing cancer rates, heart disease, and overall death. What is proven is that individuals who eat five servings of fruits or vegetables daily get all the benefits of vitamins (less cancer, heart disease, and death) without any of the harmful effects.

Awaken the Miracles Within You

The Miracle of God's Will

Discovering God's will for our lives is a wonderful miracle. Unfortunately, too often we think of it as being dull or boring or vague. Actually we sometimes interpret ugly circumstances as being God's will.

Some say, "I suppose it's God's will for me, so I guess I'll put up with it." And they're talking about something they hate.

Look at it this way. Overcoming trouble is a priceless way to learn. Nothing teaches like experience. We increase our esteem of ourselves only by conquering an obstacle.

God's ultimate will for us is an interesting life, good health, happiness, and true self-expression. It is in our pursuit of these that we can say, "Thy will be done." The, the will of God is joyous and fine.

The recommendations and information in this handout are appropriate in most cases. However, for specific information concerning your personal medical condition, please, consult your doctor.