

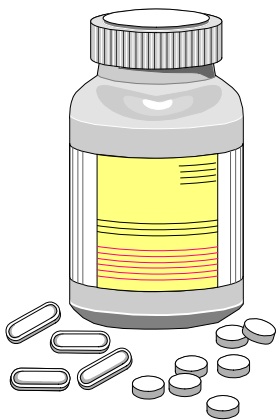
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2008

Dietary Supplements

Get the facts before taking dietary supplements. Surveys show that half the U.S. adult population use dietary supplements. Supplement and “health food” advertisers often target older people and athletes by claiming their products prevent diseases, or improve strength and endurance.

ALWAYS CHECK WITH YOUR DOCTOR



What are Dietary Supplements?

Dietary supplements include vitamins, minerals, amino acids, phytochemicals, fiber, herbal products, and botanicals. Many supplements are concentrates and extracts and may supply considerably higher quantities of substances than naturally occur in the diet.

Manufacturers are required to include the words “dietary supplements” on all products labels. They come in many forms, such as tablets, capsules, powders, soft gels, gel caps, and liquids. Supplements can be purchased at health food, grocery, drug stores, mail-order catalogs, TV programs, the Internet, and direct sales.

Arguments Against Supplements

People who eat a balanced diet, following MyPyramid and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans will have no trouble obtaining the necessary nutrients. Supplements lack beneficial nutrients that are only found in foods. When taken as pills, they are more likely to interfere with the absorption of other nutrients.

Supplements can be a waste of money. Obtaining nutrients from food sources is less costly. Food will provide water, fiber, phytochemicals, and other as yet undiscovered benefits.

High doses of some supplements may be harmful. Individual’s tolerances for nutrients vary. High intakes of some supplements may impair the effectiveness of some drugs. Supplement manufacturers are not required to prove the safety or effectiveness of their product.

Arguments for Supplements

Older adults have lower energy needs and possibly poorer absorption rates which makes it necessary to consume a more nutrient-dense diet. Many older adults consume nutrient-poor diets, due to illness or disease, tooth or mouth problems, lack of taste, not enough money, inability to cook, shop, or feed themselves.

People who lose their appetite due to illness or those who are on medication could benefit from nutrient supplementation. Antacids, laxatives, and prescription drugs used regularly can cause the body to excrete, rather than absorb, many nutrients. Decreased stomach acid and kidney function in older adults may also affect nutrient absorption and excretion.

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Low-dose multivitamin-mineral supplements are more likely to benefit those with limited dietary intakes. Recommendations for using these supplements depend on an individualized dietary assessment and a physician's prescription.

Indicators of Supplement Fraud

- ✓ Claims that the product is a secret cure.
- ✓ Claims that the product can cure a wide range of unrelated diseases. No product can do that.
- ✓ Claims that a product is backed by scientific studies, but lists no references or references that are inadequate.
- ✓ Claims that the supplement has only benefits and no side effects.
- ✓ Accusations that the medical profession, drug companies, and the government are suppressing information about a particular topic.

Some Dietary Supplements That Can Be Harmful in High Doses:

- Vitamin A
- Vitamin D
- Vitamin B6
- Niacin
- Iron
- Folic Acid
- Ma huang
- Guar gum
- Willow bark
- Comfrey
- Chapparral

How do I Choose a Supplement?

- ✓ Check with your physician, especially if you are taking prescriptions or over-the-counter medications
- ✓ Other healthcare professionals such as registered pharmacists and registered dietitians can be sources of information about dietary supplements.
- ✓ Decide which form to purchase - liquid, chewable, gel caps, soft caps, tablets, capsules, or powders.
- ✓ Forget all the claims and pictures on the label and look at the ingredients and the price. Many "tonics" aimed at older adults are mostly alcohol and do not contain a variety of nutrients.
- ✓ Most people should choose a supplement that provides all of the RDA* nutrients (vitamins and minerals) in amounts equal to or smaller than RDA*.
- ✓ Avoid "high potency" preparations and those with more than the daily dose of Vitamins A and D or any mineral.
- ✓ "Organic" or "natural" does not guarantee that the product is safe or will work any better. These products will usually be more costly.

**Recommended Dietary Allowances, published by the National Academy of Sciences are a general guide to the amount of vitamins that the average person should consume to prevent deficiencies.*

**Food and Nutrition Services
can assist in providing nutrition information.**

**Call 703-813-4800 and
ask for a Registered Dietitian.**