



## Supplementation 101

### Why supplement your diet?

1. Poor Diet
  - a. Since the ancient Egyptians, through the time of Hippocrates, and right up to the present, poor diet has been described and decried by physicians. Little has changed for the better, and much has changed for the worse. Though nutritionists place emphasis on food selection as our vitamin source, everyone else eats because they are hungry, because it makes them feel better, and because it gives pleasure. We could, of course, legislate Good Food Laws and make it against the law to make, sell, or eat junk. That is as likely to work as Prohibition. It presents me with novel images of seven-year-olds bootlegging Kool-Aid and their parents running Twinkies across state lines.
  - b. Supplements, at least as we know them, haven't been around that long. How did our ancestors survive without them? To be painfully blunt, **they didn't**.
    - i. Mother Nature has never cared about optimum health. Her main objective is survival and propagation of the species. So she programmed us humans to survive on even the crummiest diet, nutrition-wise, into our twenties, when we're old enough to reproduce. Beyond that, we're on our own.

This genetic twist is a throwback to primitive times, when supermarkets and refrigerators didn't exist and food was not always plentiful. Those who could stay alive on very slim pickins had a tremendous survival advantage.

Over thousands of years, one generation has passed its "survival genes" on to the next. So thanks to our ancestors, we are equipped to subsist on minuscule amounts of the essential nutrients, just in case a famine comes along. But this insurance policy remains effective only into our twenties--just long enough for us to reproduce. By the time we reach our twenties, we have established lifelong eating habits. And because our survival genes have protected us from the adverse effects of our dietary transgressions, we have no reason to believe that what we're eating (or not eating) is doing us any harm. So we continue feeding ourselves nutritionally vacant junk foods, unaware that they're quietly eroding our health. Often we don't see the effects for several decades.

The point here is this: Even with a lousy diet, we can remain fairly healthy through our first 30 to 40 years of life. But if we want to achieve optimum health and maximum life span, the nutritional bare bones just won't cut it. We need to eat nutritious foods, and we need to take supplements.
2. Healthy weight loss:
  - a. While vitamin supplements do not produce weight loss, persons trying to lose weight face a nutritional adequacy problem of their own. Approximately 50 million Americans admit to being "on a diet" at any given time. Virtually all popular un-supplemented weight loss plans are nutrient deficient. For many, eating less food means eating fewer food-source vitamins. Taking supplements can be seen as especially important for all people that are dieting.
3. Nutritional Gaps
  - a. "Supplements" by definition are designed to fill nutritional gaps in a bad diet. They fill in what may be surprisingly large gaps in a good diet as well.
    - i. In the case of vitamin E, doing so is likely to save millions of lives. The New England Journal of Medicine had two articles in the May 20, 1993 issue, showing that persons taking vitamin E supplements had an approximately 40% reduction in cardiovascular disease. Nearly 40,000 men and 87,000 women took part in the studies. The more vitamin E they took, and the longer they took it, the less cardiovascular disease they experienced.





## Personal Health

- ii. Even a modest quantity of vitamin C prevents disease and saves lives. Just 500 mg daily results in a 42 percent lower risk of death from heart disease and a 35 percent lower risk of death from any cause. Since two-thirds of the population is not eating sufficient fruits and vegetables, the only way to close the gap is with vitamin supplements.
  - b. Supplements are NOT drugs. And we shouldn't think of supplements and drugs in the same category. Since supplements aren't drugs, they are generally very safe. Some supplements (like protein, creatine, glutamine, electrolytes, and amino acids) can help fuel the body for natural muscle repair and growth following resistance training.
  - c. If you want to fight disease and achieve maximum life span, you can't do it with diet alone. You need the extra nutritional boost that only supplements can provide. In many ways, supplements are to humans what fertilizer is to plants. Give a plant adequate amounts of sunlight and water, and it will survive. Add some nutrient-rich fertilizer (organic, of course), and the plant will thrive. For us humans, the same principle applies. A healthful, balanced diet supplies the body with sufficient nutrients to carry out routine tasks. Supplements such as vitamins, minerals, essential fatty acids, phytochemicals, and more enrich the body's internal environment to fortify cellular protection, repair, and regeneration and support the Renewal process.
  - d. Women:
    - i. Tens of millions of women have a special concern. Oral contraceptives lower serum levels of B-vitamins, especially B-6, plus niacin (B-3), thiamin (B-1), riboflavin (B-2), folic acid, vitamin C and B-12. (6). Ladies, when is the last time your physician instructed you to be sure to take supplemental vitamin C and B-complex vitamins as long as you are on the Pill?
4. Conclusion:
- a. Supplements make any dietary lifestyle, whether good or bad, significantly better. Supplements are an easy, practical entry-level better-nutrition solution for the public. A television-educated populace is more likely to take some tablets than to eat organ meats, wheat germ, bean sprouts and ample vegetables. Media supplement-scare-stories notwithstanding, taking supplements is not the problem; it is **a solution**. Malnutrition is the problem.

Here are some questions to ask yourself when considering whether you should take supplements or not:

- 1) Should I eat right, take a supplement, and be healthy?
- 2) Or, should I eat right and take no supplements, be vitamin E and C deficient my entire lifespan, and greatly increase my risk of sickness and death at any age?
- 3) Or, should I eat wrong and take no supplements, and be even worse off?
- 4) Or, should I eat wrong, but take daily vitamin supplements, and be a lot less sickly than if I did not take supplements?

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*Marc & Ed*

