

# How To Select Nutritional Supplements

By Joe Talent

Consistent use of multivitamins and other key supplements can promote good health and help prevent disease. Studies have found that ongoing use of multivitamins (preferably with minerals) and other single-nutrient supplements (like calcium or folic acid) demonstrated quantifiable positive impact in areas ranging from strengthening the immune system of highly-vulnerable elderly patients, to drastically reducing the risk of neural tube birth defects such as spina bifida. Nutritional supplements and vitamins help in both health promotion and disease prevention. It is never too late to start incorporating supplements into a healthy lifestyle, there is compelling evidence that consistent, long-term use provides the strongest benefits.

The routine use of multivitamins and mineral supplements by the elderly could improve immune function and thus reduce infectious disease, potentially cutting in half the total number of days they are sick. Supplementation with calcium and vitamin D could reduce the rate of hip fracture among older people by at least 20%.

While the addition of a multivitamin would benefit most people, different additional supplements should be chosen based on the specific life stage, gender or lifestyle of the individual. For example, though calcium is generally important for all men and women, it is particularly critical for children building bone mass and elderly people seeking to preserve it.

While all people should strive to eat a healthy and balanced diet, no matter what their age or health circumstance, studies find that few people do. Many studies have shown that most diets fall well below the Recommended Dietary Allowance for many nutrients. Supplements are a proven bridge between what we should eat and what we actually eat," she said.

## Things to Consider Before Taking Supplements

- Supplements may be helpful, it is important to remember that no supplement will replace the value of a healthy diet. Most major medical establishments recommend that healthy adults get their vitamins and minerals from food rather than relying solely on supplements. Food is rich in phytochemicals and other helpful substances that are not present in supplements.
- Before supplementing the diet with any vitamins or minerals, people are encouraged to speak with their physician. Some people should not take certain supplements if they have been

diagnosed with other conditions. For example, people with kidney problems are often advised against taking magnesium.

- Do not exceed the manufacturer's recommended dose without professional advice. Health risks can arise when there is too much of any given vitamin or mineral in the body.

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