

VITAMINS AND SUPPLEMENTS —

TO SUPPLEMENT OR NOT?

Mayo Clinic in Scottsdale Provides 10 Tips for Using Vitamins and Supplements Wisely

By Robert R. Orford, M.D., C.M.

Director, Executive Health Program at Mayo Clinic in Scottsdale, Ariz.

The reports are everywhere and the recommendations are often contradictory and confusing. Magazine articles, Web sites and friends are all urging you to supplement your diet with vitamins, minerals and herbs. But should you do it? And if so, how much should you take?

Supplements are not inherently good or bad. It all depends on how you use them. If you're considering supplements, here are some factors to consider:

- **Look at your overall health habits.**

Stop smoking. Start exercising. Clean up your diet. After you've done these things, then it may be reasonable to think of taking supplements.

- **Whole foods are your best source of nutrients.**

Fill your diet with whole grains, lean meats and dairy products. Most importantly, eat plenty of fruits and vegetables – the more colorful, the better.

- **Avoid “megadoses.”** More is not necessarily better. Check dosages with your physician.

- **Consider just one good multi-vitamin supplement.**

Recent studies suggest that a multi-vitamin may be helpful, especially for older people. Choose one that provides about 100% DV (daily value) of all the vitamins and minerals.

- **Emphasize quality.** Look for an independent assessment of quality. For example, the USP symbol ensures that supplements meet standards for strength and purity established by the U.S. Pharmacopeia (USP).

- **Track effectiveness.** Let your physician take a look at your supplement bottles. Discuss the effect you're hoping to obtain. Track your observations and choose an end-point for evaluating whether or not it was effective.

- **Remember — just because it's natural, that doesn't mean it's safe.** Many supplements interfere with medications and even with each other. Check with your physician about potential interactions.

- **If you are at risk for heart disease, consider fish oil.**

Research shows that fish oil supplements may be helpful in protecting against heart disease. Still, eating fish twice a week may be just as effective.

- **If you're planning on getting pregnant, take folic acid.**

The research is very strong that folic acid helps prevent neural tube defects.

- **Calcium is important.** Most women need between 1000 and 1500 mg of calcium and men need 1000 mg each day. But consider that you may already be getting an adequate amount from dairy products and green leafy vegetables. If you are not, talk to your doctor about which calcium supplement might best help you achieve the right amount.

Remember, supplements are not substitutes. They can't replace the hundreds of nutrients in whole foods that you need for a nutritionally balanced diet. But, in conjunction with a healthy lifestyle, supplements can be used effectively to bolster your health.

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Robert R. Orford, M.D., C.M., is Director of the Mayo Clinic Executive Health Program in Scottsdale, Ariz. Mayo Clinic Executive Health Programs are located in Scottsdale; Rochester, Minn.; and Jacksonville, Fla.

To schedule an appointment, call 480-301-4141.