

Vitamin and mineral supplements— should we take them or not?

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According to the Health Supplement Stores Industry Profile there are about 5,000 health supplement companies with sales amounting to approximately \$6 billion. The bulk of these sales are comprised of vitamin and mineral supplements. While we're all familiar with these types of supplements, we may not realize that vitamins and minerals have vital roles in all life processes. Scientists are just now scratching the surface of the scope of functions that vitamins, minerals and other components of food play in health and well-being.

Vitamins are known to have necessary functions in regards to many chemical reactions within the body and play important roles in cognitive function, healthy immune function, reducing the risk of neural tube defects such as spina bifida and anencephaly, reduction of the risks of vascular disease, and may play a role in reducing cataracts and macular degeneration.

Minerals are known to play important roles in transmission of nerve signals, maintenance of healthy blood cells, muscular activity, maintaining normal acid-base balance and water distribution. They also play a role in preventing osteoporosis and free radical damage. Questions have been raised in the scientific community about whether the diet of typical Americans would supply 100 percent of the recommended amounts of these important micronutrients.

In one study that took place between 1996 and 2005, numerous people were analyzed, including subjects ranging from professional athletes to sedentary individuals. The results of this study found that although the amount of calories ranged from excessive (proven by our expanding waistlines) to calorie deficient, the interesting result was that all of the subjects failed to meet the recommended amounts of these important micronutrients needed to maintain optimal health.

It is common knowledge that the population of the United States is losing the “battle of the bulge” and that the number of people on a weight loss diet is growing on a daily basis. In a study from 2010, four popular diets were analyzed and the results showed that all four plans failed to provide the minimum recommended amounts of 27 micronutrients that were analyzed.

This is alarming to me because these diets are recommended by many health professionals. This study found that these popular diets could put an individual into a state of deficiency that has been shown scientifically to increase the risks for many dangerous and debilitating health conditions and diseases.

Might this be one of the reasons that these diets fail to accomplish their goals of people losing and maintaining a healthy weight?

The question then arises as to what vitamins an individual should take and whether there is a specific type of vitamin that people should look for. For me, the best place for obtaining these important compounds is still from the food we eat. If we are not consuming the right amounts or combinations of foods to reach our goals I still want to obtain what I need from food sources. One way of doing this is taking a multivitamin such as Catalyn, made by Standard Process. Catalyn is a whole food supplement which contains 15 food sources to provide vitamins, minerals and all the important components of food as nature intended it.

Many of the benefits of the components of food are still a mystery to scientists, so I would rather ingest a pill from whole food sources that contain all of its parts rather than what has been produced in a laboratory made of isolated components. Standard Process uses ingredients grown on their own organic farms. Even the water used to irrigate the crops is from naturally occurring artesian sources. Standard Process offers more than 160 whole foods supplements. The Palmer Chiropractic Clinics have chosen to offer Standard Process products for sale to patients, due to the overall quality of the products and the amount of research that supports their quality and effectiveness.

The bottom line is that a healthy diet complete with lots of fruits and vegetables is the best way to get the vitamins and minerals you need. But if you feel you need vitamin or mineral supplements, look for whole food options.

Many health professionals as well as those among the general public who have healthy diets believe that giving the body the proper nutrition allows the body to operate at its optimal level. The right nutrition also provides the body with the materials and ability to heal itself. One of the best health decisions you can make is to improve your diet. You'll be amazed at how much more energy you have, how your sleep is improved and how your overall quality of life is improved.