

FITNESS TIPS

New Thinking on Multivitamins

(NAPSA)—There is a growing belief among health professionals that virtually everyone may benefit from taking a daily multivitamin. Research has indicated that even those who closely follow the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the Food Guide Pyramid can further reduce their risk for chronic disease by including a multivitamin in their daily routine.

Nutrition is widely thought to play an important role in the prevention of some of the leading causes of death like cancer and cardiovascular disease. In fact, one recent study found that the lowest risk for those diseases was among those with a balanced diet and who took a daily multivitamin for five years or more.

But many of us don't follow that kind of balanced diet. More often than not our diets consist of "on-the-go" meals and snacks which are high in fat and calories and don't provide necessary amounts of essential vitamins like vitamin E, folate, vitamins B₆ and B₁₂ or other healthful nutrients including the carotenoids lycopene, lutein and zeaxanthin.

People who are dieting also may not be getting all of the vitamins they need since weight loss plans tend to limit total amounts of food or one or more food groups. Dieters following low-fat weight loss plans can often miss out on fat-soluble vitamins like vitamin E, while high-protein diets can limit many of the B vitamins and carotenoids. Vegetarian diets that eliminate all animal foods—often thought of as the healthiest way to eat—can limit the intake of vitamin B₁₂, which is found primarily in meats and fish.

Age or life stage can also affect whether or not a person is getting optimal vitamin intake.



Lifestyle behaviors that affect your nutritional health include smoking and alcohol consumption. Research has indicated that smokers have lower vitamin C levels than non-smokers. Alcohol can interfere with the body's ability to absorb thiamin, vitamins B₆, C and D and folic acid.

Even where you live can make a difference. Because vitamin D is synthesized by the skin when exposed to sunlight, those who live in northern latitudes or who otherwise don't get much sun may not be getting enough of the vitamin, which is crucial to bone health.

To ensure you are meeting recommended levels of essential vitamins and minerals and other key nutrients, look for a multivitamin that provides 100 percent of the Daily Value (DV) for most vitamins and minerals. If you are taking single supplements along with your multivitamin, check with your doctor or pharmacist to make sure your total intakes are reasonable and safe. It's also important to remember that "more" is not "better," and that supplements aren't a substitute for a healthy diet. Overall, a prudent strategy for a healthy living should include a balanced diet, maintenance of proper body weight and a daily multivitamin.