

## WHO SHOULD TAKE SUPPLEMENTS?

### *It is it really necessary to take supplements? Do we not get enough nutrients in the food we eat?*

These are questions that are often asked, and depending on who you ask, you will get different answers. Below are the guidelines I use to determine if/when supplements are needed.

As a general rule, the average, basically healthy individual who eats a balanced diet and leads a low-stress lifestyle does not necessarily need to take supplements regularly; however, there are times in a healthy individual's life when certain supplements or a general high-level nutritional program is helpful on a daily, monthly or yearly basis.

Supplementation is necessary for the following individuals or in the following situations to ensure the body has the nutrients it requires to function optimally and avoid a build-up of toxins:

1. Physically active individuals
2. Exposure to higher levels of pollution (city living, commuting, job-related)
3. During periods of higher stress / high-stress job
4. Individuals who do not eat a balanced diet or a healthy diet (children, teenagers, elderly)
  - Excess sugar, for example, depletes the body of vitamins B & C, glutamine, chromium, magnesium; supplementation can help to balance blood sugar and reduce cravings
5. Recovering from an illness – Example: electrolytes needed due to loose bowels from chemo
6. Before/after surgery to support rapid healing – A, C & Zinc can help with tissue repair and reduce risk of infection
7. While dieting
8. Fatigue
9. Smokers – A, C, E, Selenium
10. Regular alcohol use – Bs, beta-carotene

Individuals who begin supplementing with nutrients that they are deficient in will notice an increase in energy and a positive change in their health. If a change is not noticed, it may mean:

1. The dose being taken is not high enough for their individual needs
2. The form of nutrient being taken is not a form that is easily absorbed by the body
3. The supplement is simply a poor quality supplement and cannot be absorbed properly
4. The individual has been taking the same supplement for too long and the body has become accustomed to it and, therefore, is no longer effective.

Individual nutrition programs can be designed to build up, balance or detoxify the body depending on the individual's current state of health. The two main supplements that form the foundation of any sound supplement program include a good quality:

1. Multi-vitamin/mineral
2. Omega-3 supplement

Avoid the shotgun approach to supplementation, that is, taking a particular supplement to see if it works; if no change is noticed, stop taking it and try another. This approach to supplementation is very confusing and frustrating and does not yield results.

To get the most out of your supplements:

1. Start by ensuring you are eating a completely balanced and healthy diet as vitamins and minerals need good quality proteins and fats to be absorbed properly.
2. Avoid/limit caffeine, and do not have it within two hours after taking your supplements as it can cause the nutrients to go through the digestive tract too quickly before they have had an opportunity to be properly absorbed.
3. Always start with a multi-vitamin/mineral before supplementing with individual nutrients. All of the vitamins and minerals work together in a delicate balance. If you supplement with just one nutrient on its own, in trying to correct an imbalance, you may unknowingly cause another.
4. Always know why you are taking each supplement, what it is supposed to do in your body, and what positive changes you should notice by taking it.

**Always Remember:**

1. **Even though supplements can greatly improve our health and eliminate symptoms, they do not replace a good diet.**
2. **If only supplements are taken to correct a health condition and the diet is not changed, only a certain level of health can be achieved.**

The above material is for informational purposes only and is not meant to be a substitute for professional medical advice.

References:

1. Haas, Elson M. (1992). *Staying Healthy with Nutrition*. Berkeley, California: Celestial Arts Publishing