

Does Poor Vitamin Intake Equal Poor Health?



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In addition to eating vegetables, another memory of childhood was a daily reminder to “take your vitamins”. Now that you’ve grown up and are eating at least five portions of fruits and vegetables every day (right?), do you still need to regularly take vitamins? The answer is yes.

Why take vitamins?

There are a number of reasons to take daily doses of vitamins and minerals. Vitamins and minerals are involved in just about every aspect of your body’s function, from metabolism, to growth, to reproduction, to wound healing, to brain function, sleep and so on. Did you know that magnesium and vitamin B6 are cofactors needed to make neurotransmitters, such as serotonin, that when low, can lead to depression? Did you know that selenium is a cofactor in thyroid hormone metabolism?

Why else?

- Many don’t eat healthy balanced diets that include five portions of fruits and vegetables every day and coldwater fish three times per week.
- Food that is processed, frozen, salted, dried, artificially colored and flavored or treated with preservatives loses its nutritional value when compared to fresh organic food.
- Nutrient-depleted soils due to modern farming techniques have lowered the nutrient content of crops.
- Your absorption of nutrients may not be 100%. Your absorption decreases as you age, with stress, with certain medications and with certain disease conditions. In these cases, you require higher amounts of vitamins and minerals.

Harvard Medical School recommends you take vitamins

A study was conducted at Harvard Medical School on the role of inadequate vitamin intake and its association with chronic disease. Clinically important research studies from 1966 to 2002 were reviewed as part of this study. The researchers concluded that inadequate intake of several vitamins was linked to chronic diseases, including coronary heart disease, cancer and osteoporosis. The researchers also reported that many physicians may be unaware of common food sources of vitamins or unsure which vitamins they should recommend for their patients.

The researchers also reported specific vitamin deficiency-related diseases:

- Folate and vitamins B6 and B12 are required for homocysteine metabolism and are associated with coronary heart disease risk.
- Inadequate folate status is associated with neural tube defect and some cancers.
- Vitamin E and lycopene may decrease the risk of prostate cancer.
- Vitamin D3 is associated with decreased occurrence of fractures when taken with calcium.

Who to ask for advice?

If you are concerned about which vitamins are best and safest for you, you should consult your licensed naturopathic doctor. As a starter, a high quality hypoallergenic multivitamin and mineral supplement for women or for men is an excellent choice.