

## HEALTH

# Vitamins and Supplements

by Abbey N. Folsom

**L**ikely, you have taken a supplement or at least considered it, as have most people. If you are unsure about how to source safe brands or which vitamins and supplements are appropriate for you, read on.

According to the 2018 Consumer Survey of Dietary Supplements from the Council for Responsible Nutrition, 75 percent of American adults take dietary supplements (up 10 percent from 2017). A 2017 *Journal of Nutrition* study reported that 29 percent of older Americans take four or more supplements. The U.S. vitamin and supplement industry is worth approximately \$37 billion per year.

Classes of supplements include vitamins, minerals, trace minerals, trace metals, B-vitamins, antioxidants, and phyto-therapy or botanicals – even the growing CBD (cannabidiol) trend. A

vitamin is an organic molecule that assists metabolism. Vitamins do not contain calories or yield energy; rather, they help produce energy. For example, B vitamins directly contribute to the metabolism of glucose.

### WHY TAKE VITAMINS AND SUPPLEMENTS?

People of any age can benefit from supplements. They support a balanced diet and can slow the progression of health disorders, whereas chronic vitamin and mineral deficiencies can create health problems.

Consult with your doctor before beginning a vitamin and supplement routine. He or she may recommend lab work to test for specific nutrient levels and metabolic deficiencies. The

## BONE AND JOINT HEALTH

Bone metabolism is the root of our immune system. Immune and stem cells are produced in the center of our long bones. Stem cells can help repair damage and generate many different types of new cells. Minerals and antioxidants for bone health include calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, boron and vitamins C, D, E and K. Maintaining bone mineral density is the goal. Focus on bone health early in life to prevent degenerative osteoporosis. It is never too late to start taking better care of your bone and joint health.

In the 1990s, glucosamine chondroitin, which is made from shellfish, became popular for joint pain relief. However, shellfish is high in purine and causes gout, so glucosamine is not recommended for people prone to painful gout flares.

Many people suffer from inflammation of the joints (arthritis). The current trends in joint pain relief supplements are:

- » Hyaluronic acid, a naturally occurring lubricant found in joints.
- » Antioxidants CBD, tart cherry and turmeric, which decrease inflammation. They are similar to nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs but without gastrointestinal side effects.
- » Collagen and vitamin C, which are essential for soft tissue repair.

Along with a healthful diet and exercise, nourishing our bones with minerals and antioxidants is one of the best things we can do for longevity.



results are a guide to which vitamins and supplements are specific to your health story. It's important for your healthcare provider to identify underlying medical conditions and review potential interactions with your prescriptions. A licensed nutritionist can help you focus your eating plan and direct you to specific nutrients.

Make sure your doctors have an updated list of all prescribed medications, vitamins, supplements and over-the-counter medicines. This is critical if you are preparing for surgery.

### WHERE SHOULD I BUY THEM? WHAT ABOUT ANY SAFETY CONCERNS?


You can buy them from local retailers with established retail brands. The Food and Drug Administration does not regulate the vitamin and supplement industry like it does the food and pharmaceutical industries. The supplements you take should be certified as following good manufacturing practices (GMPs). This is a third-party accreditation that follows FDA guidelines.

Safety risks have been associated with poor sourcing, improper labeling and megadosing. Sometimes supplements contain toxic ingredients that are not listed on the label. These toxic ingredients can and have caused organ strain.

Unfortunately, there are no supplements for weight loss. Many have been pulled from the market because they contain an illegally sourced plant (ephedra) from China that is a performance stimulant known for heart and stroke risks.

The vitamin and supplement industry remains controversial, even among healthcare providers. To make an informed decision, have a conversation with your doctor and nutritionist about which vitamins and supplements are best for you, and purchase ones that meet GMP standards and your health needs.



Abbey N. Folsom, MS, CNS, LDN, is a Tallahassee-based certified nutrition specialist and licensed nutritionist/dietitian. 

## RESOURCES

- » 2018 CRN Consumer Survey on Dietary Supplements, [crnusa.org/CRNConsumerSurvey](http://crnusa.org/CRNConsumerSurvey)
- » U.S. Food & Drug Administration, [fda.gov/food/dietary-supplements](http://fda.gov/food/dietary-supplements) and [fda.gov](http://fda.gov), search for "facts about current good manufacturing practices cGMPs"
- » NSF's dietary supplements listing, [info.nsf.org/Certified/GMP/Listings.asp](http://info.nsf.org/Certified/GMP/Listings.asp)



If one of your parents has had a broken bone, especially a broken hip, you may need to be screened earlier for osteoporosis. This is a medical condition in which bones become weak and are more likely to break.

Share your family health history with your doctor. Your doctor can help you take steps to prevent broken bones.

### HOW CAN OSTEOPOROSIS AFFECT MY HEALTH?

People with osteoporosis are more likely to break bones, most often in the hip, forearm, wrist and spine. While most broken bones are caused by falls, osteoporosis can weaken bones so that a break can occur by coughing or bumping into something.

As you get older, you are more likely to have osteoporosis, and recovering from a broken bone becomes harder. Broken bones can have lasting effects including chronic pain. Osteoporosis can cause the spinal bones to break and begin to collapse so that some people can't stand up straight. Broken hips are especially serious. Afterward, many people are not able to live on their own and are more likely to die sooner.

### HOW CAN I FIND OUT IF I HAVE OSTEOPOROSIS?

Osteoporosis affects about 25 percent of women ages 65 and over and about 5 percent of men ages 65 and over. Many don't know they have it until they break a bone. Screening is important so that people can take steps to decrease the effects of osteoporosis.

Screening is recommended for women who are 65 years old or older and for women who are 50 to 64 and have certain risk factors, which include having a parent who has broken a hip. You can use the FRAX Risk Assessment tool to learn if you should be screened. It uses several factors to determine how likely you are to have osteoporosis.

Screening for osteoporosis is commonly done using a type of low-level X-rays called dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry (DXA). Screening also can show if you have low bone mass, meaning your bones are weaker than normal and are likely to develop osteoporosis.

### HOW CAN I IMPROVE MY BONE HEALTH IF I HAVE OSTEOPOROSIS?

To improve your bone health and strengthen weak bones:

- » Take medications to strengthen your bones, and avoid medications that can make your bones weaker.
- » Eat a healthy diet with adequate calcium and vitamin D.
- » Perform weight-bearing exercises regularly.
- » Don't smoke.
- » Limit alcohol use.

Don't wait until you have a broken bone to improve your bone health. Start now!

**Source:** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.