

New study finds the more supplements you take the healthier you are

Supplement fanatics have long been accused of 'just making expensive urine' but an authoritative study, published in the Nutrition Journal, finds that the more supplements a person takes, the healthier they are.

The study, conducted by Dr Gladys Block at the University of California, examined a number of health measures, including blood vitamin levels and disease risk, in three groups of people - those who took no supplements; those who took a multivitamin usually based on basic RDA levels; and those who took a combination of many supplements such as vitamins C, E, D, essential fats, lecithin, coenzyme Q10, glucosamine, B complex and others. Almost nine out of ten of the multiple-supplement users consumed 20 or more different kinds of supplements throughout the year.

The study was partly motivated by the concern that taking large amounts of supplemental nutrients might lead to adverse effects from overdosing, but the results showed startling health benefits and disease risk reductions the more supplements were taken, with no apparent downside.

The risk for diabetes was 73% less and the risk for coronary heart disease was 52% less in the multiple-supplement takers compared to those who didn't take any supplements. On self-assessment, the multiple-supplement takers were 74% more likely to rate their health as 'good' or 'excellent'.

In blood tests, none of the multiple-supplement takers had sub-optimal levels of vitamin C, while 94% had optimal levels (defined as greater than 1.0mg per decilitre). However 32% of the non-supplement takers had sub-optimal levels, as did 9% of the single-supplement takers. Less than half (47%) of the single-supplement takers had optimal vitamin C levels.

One of the best overall indicators of health is your **homocysteine level**. The lower your homocysteine, the lower your risk of heart disease, strokes, Alzheimer's disease, depression, osteoporosis and pregnancy complications.

In this study, four times as many people not taking supplements (45%) had elevated homocysteine levels (above 9 $\mu\text{mol/l}$ - averaging 9.6) compared to the multiple-supplement takers (11% - averaging 6.1). Single-supplement takers were three times more likely (37%) to have raised homocysteine levels. Elevated homocysteine is most reliably lowered by supplementing optimal levels of vitamin B2, B6, B12, folic acid, TMG and zinc.

Multiple-supplement takers also had significantly higher HDL 'good' cholesterol, lower triglycerides, a better HDL/cholesterol ratio and lower blood pressure - all reliable indicators of reduced risk for cardiovascular disease.

There was no indication of risk of overdose or negative side-effects from taking multiple supplements. Far from wasting their money 'making expensive urine', **this study strongly suggests that popping a handful of supplements a day**

is likely to add years to your life and life to your years.

These findings are completely consistent with the emerging science helping to define what 'optimum nutrition' really means. More people are realising that supplementing your diet is necessary if you want to achieve optimal health. An estimated four in ten people in Britain now take supplements, although most take a single supplement, usually based on the basic 'RDA' levels for the main vitamins and minerals. (The RDA is the government-recommended level required to avoid deficiency rather than achieve optimal health.)

On the basis of studying the science of nutrition for the past 30 years, I **take five different supplements, twice a day with breakfast and lunch, as well as following as healthy a diet as possible.** These are:

A high strength multivitamin (providing 15mcg of vitamin D and high levels of minerals).

Vitamin C, together with zinc and berry extracts.

Essential omega 3 and 6 fats.

Phospholipids (phosphatidyl choline, serine, DMAE) and other brain-friendly nutrients including the amino acid pyroglutamate.

Extra antioxidants including glutathione, alpha-lipoic acid, co-enzyme Q10, selenium and resveratrol

In addition, **I monitor my homocysteine level**, which is the best indicator of methylation (an essential biochemical process which our bodies perform 1 billion times every second!). An ideal level is below 7, or roughly a tenth of your age. Mine is 4.5. If it were raised, I would also supplement additional 'methylating' nutrients (vitamin B2, B6, B12, folic acid, TMG and zinc). **If you'd like to find out more or have your homocysteine tested, visit www.thehfactor.com.**

I also occasionally take **digestive enzymes, probiotics and glutamine powder** if I have any digestive problems; **extra chromium** if my energy is low; **niacin (B3)** if I get a headache; extra **vitamin A** if I have an infection; and **extra magnesium** if I'm stressed. If I have an allergic reaction, I take **extra quercetin with MSM, glutamine, vitamin C and bromelain.**

I recommend you do **the same, or something similar. You can find out precisely what is likely to be optimal for you by completing my on-line 100% Health Programme**

To find out more about estimates of optimal levels of vitamins, minerals and essential fats, visit www.patrickholford.com/supplements

To see the American supplement study in full (Gladys Block et al, Usage patterns, health, and nutritional status of long-term multiple dietary supplement users: a cross-sectional study, The Nutrition Journal, 6: 30, 2007), [click here](#).