

## Holistic Nutrition Your Patients Are Craving

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Most of your patients are taking a multivitamin. If they aren't, they know they probably should. They might be taking vitamin C for immunity, or vitamin E because they heard it has antioxidant actions. But is what they're taking making a difference? Could it be harming them? Is it enough to make up for poor eating habits?

Although we know that healthy eating puts us on the path to health, many people take nutritional supplements to overcome their unhealthy food choices. We've certainly heard often enough how nutritional supplements are supposed to make us healthier and how many units, daily values and recommended daily allowances (RDAs) of vitamins and minerals we're supposed to take. You might have noticed something, though; often, people don't feel much of a difference but they keep taking them because they know they "should."

It might help a little to explain the difference between nutritional supplements and the nutrition we get from food. What most people hear or read is not actually about a complete vitamin. It's what the FDA decided was the active ingredient of a vitamin. For example, ascorbic acid is called "vitamin C" but it leaves out other compounds like tyrosinase, copper, bioflavonoids and rutin, which are all included in the food form of vitamin C. In the case of vitamin E, alpha-tocopherol was determined to be the active ingredient, eliminating the other tocopherols, selenium and more.

Having determined the chemical compound of these particular molecules, some supplement companies began synthesizing them in labs. Many have overshot the RDA by several hundred-fold since these supplements are missing the other elements found in the food form, making them harder to absorb.

You might notice when you open a bottle of a synthetic supplement that it smells like chemicals. Your fluorescent yellow urine might be another indication. Other people mention that they burp after taking synthetic vitamins, they don't digest them well or can't take them on an empty stomach. This isn't terribly surprising, considering how alien from food they actually are.

show how taking vitamins or minerals seem to be ineffective for cancer prevention, auto-immune diseases mitigation or immunity modulation. These studies don't use the full food form of those nutrients. Many studies illustrate the difference between synthetic nutrients and nutrients as they exist in foods.

For example, eating fruits and vegetables has been associated with longer life (Nurses' Health Study) but taking preformed vitamin A over a long time is associated with bone loss in older women.<sup>1-3</sup> Another example is the [Woman's Antioxidant Cardiovascular Study](#).<sup>4</sup> In this trial, a group of women age 40 or over with a history of cardiovascular disease or were at significant risk for developing it were given ascorbic acid, vitamin E and beta carotene to take daily or every other day. At the end of the study, the researchers concluded that the antioxidant vitamins had no overall effect on this population of women. In contrast, studies on whole-food interventions (like the Mediterranean diet) do show [improvement in cardiovascular risk factors](#) for people who are at high

risk for this disease.<sup>5</sup> Studies about nutrition are in the news all the time, but it's important to read between the lines to get the full picture.

It's well known that one reason Chinese herbal formulas are effective is that using the full natural form of each herb creates a synergistic effect when they are used together. There are innumerable chemical compounds in each herb and, combined with the distinct compounds of the other herbs, can create remarkable results. It's not any different with vegetables. For example, carrots contain more than 200 known nutrients, ranging from copper, glutamine and linoleic acid to selenium, molybdenum and zinc. And that's just a carrot; what about broccoli, kale, barley grass or beets? For nutrition to work, it's impossible to isolate the active ingredient and think that could possibly be enough to encourage health.

Drugs are a good example of a synthetic isolate. Approximately 25 percent of drugs have herbal origins, but when a particular ingredient is removed from full plant form, it can often create negative side effects, as witnessed with many drug complications. Almost everything available over-the-counter uses synthetic ingredients exclusively, but there are a few that are whole-food based. The label can tell you what ingredients are used, if they are organic, and if they're properly processed. Keep in mind that using the word "natural" can be interpreted in a variety of ways, and that marketers love to add that word. You want to aim for a supplement that is based on whole-food concentrates, meaning it contains vitamins and minerals within a whole-food format. That's where you're going to see the biggest difference in how patients feel, simply because they will be getting the full complement of nutrients.

You might ask why you couldn't just eat those foods to get the result. The answer is you could, but most people are so deficient that they wouldn't be able to eat enough to get out of the hole they're in. Not to mention that most of the vegetables people are eating are enormously deficient in nutrition as well.

I had a patient with terrible gum bleeding and who also bruised very easily. Weak capillary integrity is often caused by a vitamin C deficiency but he was already taking a vitamin C supplement he bought at a grocery store. However, it was only ascorbic acid, not the full-food form. When I gave him a whole-food concentrate of vitamin C that included buckwheat juice (a very concentrated form of bioflavonoids and rutin), his symptoms cleared up within a week.

All nutritional supplements are not the same. The ones from a big chain store don't resemble anything like what licensed practitioners use. Again, using a totally synthetic vitamin will be completely different from using whole-food based vitamins. Those differences are what will give you the results you're looking for with your patients.

### References

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