

# Introduction

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Recent surveys have shown that many people are taking some form of nutritional supplement. Of those people, over 90% of them believe that they are not informed enough about nutritional supplementation. Sadly, most health care professionals have very little knowledge about nutritional supplementation and natural health. It is with these things in mind, that this booklet has been compiled.

The following vitamin and mineral information was created by Michael John Nisbett and has been gathered from many reliable research and natural health sources. Please note that health information is constantly evolving. Therefore, even though great efforts have been made to include current studies, this booklet may or may not reflect the latest research in this area.

Before we start looking at the individual vitamins, we must look at several things. The first is the difference between nutrient dense foods and nutritional supplements in pill form. Richard Harkness gives some excellent advice on nutritional supplementation. He states:

Singling out a nutrient and putting it into a supplement may *not* be the same as getting it from food in the diet. For example, studies show that foods high in beta-carotene appear to *lower* lung cancer risk in people who smoke, while beta-carotene supplements appear to *increase* the risk. Foods contain thousands of substances, and currently no one knows exactly which ones work together or how they work together. Without supporting studies, there's no assurance that a particular nutrient in supplement form will have the same cancer-preventive effects shown by foods containing that nutrient.

It seems reasonable to think that certain nutritional supplements can confer some protection against cancer, but they cannot make up for inattention to other aspects of a healthful lifestyle, such as diet, exercise, not smoking, and being moderate in drinking alcoholic beverages. As Jeffrey Blumberg, Ph.D., chief of the antioxidants research lab at the USDA Human Nutrition Research Centre on Ageing at Tufts University in Boston put it, taking a nutritional supplement is "like wearing a seatbelt—it gives you a measure of protection, but it does not give you a license to drive recklessly." In other words, don't be lulled into a false sense of security and think that taking nutritional

supplements is all you need to do. (Harkness, R., 2000, Foods versus supplements: What's the difference? CA: Prima.)

These statements are in harmony with those released by both the National Institute of Health and the American Dietetic Association. So, when it comes to supplementation please rely more on whole, unrefined foods for your vitamins and minerals rather than on supplements, refined or fortified foods. Also, remember that other lifestyle changes are necessary for optimum health, i.e. regular exercise, not smoking nor drinking alcohol, drinking water, fresh air, moderate sunshine, not overeating, adequate rest and trusting in God.

We must also discuss the difference between the Recommended Dietary Allowance and the Optimum Daily Allowance.

Recommended daily allowances (RDAs) were instituted over forty years ago by the U.S. Food and Nutrition Board as a standard for the daily amounts of vitamins needed by a healthy person. Unfortunately, the amounts they came up with give us only the bare minimum required to ward off deficiency diseases such as beriberi, rickets, scurvy and night blindness. What they do not account for are the amounts needed to maintain maximum health, rather than borderline health.

Scientific studies have shown that larger dosages of vitamins and minerals help our bodies work better. The RDAs therefore are not very useful for determining what our intake of different vitamins should be. We [the authors] prefer to speak in terms of optimum daily allowances (ODAs)-the amounts of nutrients needed for vibrant good health. This entails consuming larger amounts of vitamins [and minerals] than the RDAs. By providing our bodies with an optimum daily allowance of necessary vitamins, we can enhance our health -- Taken from Balch, J.F. & Balch, P.A. (1997). Prescription for nutritional healing (second edition), p.12. Garden City Park: Avery Publishing.

Finally a few words about vitamin-drug and vitamin-vitamin interactions. TNP.com (The Natural Pharmacist) states:

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The potential for herb-drug [and other] interactions is under-recognised in our present medical milieu. While the reasons for this are numerous, it can be presumed that many healthcare providers do not ask patients about potential herb-drug interactions because of their own unfamiliarity with the subject. As a result, herb-drug [and other] interactions are largely unnoticed, uninvestigated, and consequently not reported. This will hopefully change with the advent of monitoring systems such as the Special Nutritionals Adverse Event Monitoring System, the Office of Dietary Supplements database, and journals devoted to this topic (Journal of Herbal Pharmacotherapy. Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press, Inc.). However, until sufficient information is

obtained, healthcare professionals should acknowledge the available information and determine which interactions are possible, which definitely exist, and which are clinically significant.

It is my hope that this booklet will be of benefit to both the health care professional and the layperson in search of accurate evidence-based vitamin and mineral information. Together we can use nutrition as the supportive therapy that it is intended to be.

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