

❖ **MULTI-VITAMINS**

Do I need to take any multivitamins?

This is the age old question as to whether or not one needs to take multi-vitamins, and truthfully there is no hard and fast rule! Firstly, I would recommend getting a blood test from your doctor before deciding whether or not you should start taking a supplement. The reason being, is that if you have an underlying medical condition that may be affecting your energy levels then rather than 'guessing' what you are deficient in, you can correct the cause of the problem rather than mask it...problem solved!

If you are eating a well-balanced diet, consuming servings from each of the major food groups as our trusted food pyramid suggests; then I would question the need for extra supplements as anything 'extra' that your body doesn't need it will get rid of.

The question then comes up as to the quality and freshness of the produce that you eat; if it is smothered in pesticides or has come from across the world; then perhaps some or most of the nutrients have been lost and we're not benefiting as much as we think we are. The way we prepare our foods (over cook them and denature their nutrients) can reduce the value that we get out of it.

If you do choose to take a multivitamin, some people do start ignoring their diet and assume they are getting benefits from the 'tablet' and choose more processed or refined foods; which ultimately is not a better outcome for your health. If you do choose to take a multivitamin, ask questions about where it is sourced from, is it natural or synthetically derived? Is it free from mercury and other harsh chemicals that you would ordinarily not put into your body? Does it contain the whole recommended daily intake amounts in each tablet; in which case if I am still attempting to eat a balanced-diet, will I be getting an overload?

These are issues raised are just some food for thought; I believe it is a good idea to review your diet and lifestyle and if you are time poor and unable to consume each of the major food groups each day, then do possibly consider adding a supplement; providing that you do get regular blood tests. Otherwise, keep it simple. There is so much hype on the millions of supplements out there and the fear of doing our bodies injustice by not taking them...but what is the point of living longer if we are more stressed or uptight about not looking after ourselves the best. Whilst they may have a place; I wouldn't go into debt or take 50 pills a day to 'theoretically' be the healthiest person you know!

Lastly, multivitamins can interact with lots of prescription medication and although 'natural' people often don't realise that this can be a problem. They can contain sodium or potassium that is not suitable for people with kidney or heart disease. They may contain fish oil that can thin the blood and interact with blood thinning medications, or St John's Wort can interact with the contraceptive pill...just to name a few! So check with your doctor or pharmacist first before starting them. If suitable then it is best to separate them by at least 2 hours from any other medications as they can reduce how well they are absorbed and work.

What is the difference between all the brands of multivitamins? How do I know which one to choose?

There are possibly hundreds of brands that are available on the market; and I can completely appreciate the difficulty in choosing one over the next! There is no secret though that I have found...I'm sorry to tell you!

As a general rule, Swisse contains a lot more herbs than a lot of the other brands which may or may not be suitable to you, but it certainly does allow them to differentiate between the other commercial brands. I also like how easy their names are self-explanatory as to what the product does! It takes the guess work and pain out of understanding the product so is one of the common brands that I recommend.

There are 'Practitioner only' formulations available from your naturopath or some pharmacists called Bioceuticals and Metagenics to name a couple. They generally have higher amounts of some ingredients but are not available for self-service and may be a suitable option if you have not had results with other brands.

There are homeopathic ranges like Brauer that have a different mechanism by which they work and a lot of people feel more comfortable giving them to children as they seem safer. There is a brand Fusion that uses Chinese herbs and formulations that uses Eastern medicine as their foundation. Again this is something that is reasonably new to Australia, and some pharmacies and supermarkets do keep it. There are tissue salts that work in a different way again, so there are so many options depending on how you and your family feel comfortable using.

All I can say, is that check the products and choose the one that best suits your needs, as we are all individual at the end of the day! Check this website below that illustrates the Australian guidelines regarding the recommended daily intake for the major vitamins through diet and/or supplementation. This may assist you in deciding whether or not you are able to fulfil these needs with your diet alone or whether or not you require supplements to meet them;

<http://www.medicalonline.com.au/medical/nutrition/rdi.htm>