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spirulina (sea algae), bee pollen and royal jelly, fish oil and essential fatty acid supplements, colostrum (a specialty dairy product), psyllium seed husks (a source of fiber), wheat germ, wheatgrass, and medicinal mushrooms such as the shiitake and reishi varieties.

Specialty products may offer particular health benefits or are targeted for specific conditions. These products may consist of whole foods or may be isolated compounds from natural or synthetic sources. Examples include antioxidants, probiotics (supplements containing friendly bacteria for the digestive tract), digestive enzymes, shark cartilage, or other animal products, or chemical extracts such as the hormone DHEA (dehydroepiandrosterone) and coenzyme Q10, an antioxidant.

General guidelines

Considering average dietary needs and the prevalence of certain health conditions, some basic guidelines may provide the foundation for the effective use of nutritional supplements. First, a high quality, broad-spectrum multivitamin and mineral supplement, taken once per day, is recommended to provide a range of nutrients. This should contain the B-complex vitamins B6, B12, and [folic acid](#), which may help prevent heart disease, and the minerals zinc and copper, which aid immunity. In addition to a multivitamin, antioxidants can be added to a supplementation routine. These include vitamin A (or beta-carotene), vitamin C, and vitamin E, and the mineral selenium. Antioxidants may have several positive effects on the body, such as slowing the [aging](#) process, reducing the risks of [cancer](#) and heart disease, and reducing the risks of illness and infection by supporting the immune system. Coenzyme Q10 is another antioxidant in wide usage, as studies have shown it may improve the health of the heart and reduce the effects of heart disease. Essential fatty acids, particularly omega-3, are also recommended as they are involved in many important processes in the body, including brain function. Calcium supplementation is recommended for the elderly and for women, to strengthen bones and prevent bone loss. Calcium supplements that are balanced with magnesium have a less constipating effect and are better absorbed.

After basic nutritional requirements are supported, supplements may be used to target specific needs and health conditions. For instance, athletes, men, women, children, the elderly, and vegetarians have differing needs for nutrients, and an informed use of supplements would take these differences into account. People suffering from health conditions and diseases may use specific supplements to target their condition and to support the body's healing capacity by providing optimal amounts of nutrients.

Recommended dosage

Dosages of nutritional supplements vary widely, depending on the product and individual needs. For vitamins and minerals, U.S. RDA's are essential guidelines. For other products, manufacturers' guidelines, consumer information sources such as nutritional books and magazines, and practitioners including nutritionists and naturopathic physicians may be consulted.

Precautions

Overall diet is an important first consideration for those considering nutritional supplementation. Healthy dietary habits can help optimize nutrition and the absorption of supplements, and nutritional supplements cannot substitute for a diet that is not nutritionally balanced in the first place. Supplements are best used moderately to supply any extra nutritional requirements. Sound [diets](#) contain a variety of wholesome foods. At least five servings per day of fruits and vegetables are recommended, as well as the inclusion of whole grains in the diet. Variety in the diet is important to provide a full range of vitamins and minerals. Overeating inhibits digestion and absorption of nutrients, while regular [exercise](#) contributes to sound nutrition, by improving metabolism and digestion. Drinking plenty of clean water prevents [dehydration](#), improves digestion, and helps the body flush out impurities.

Generally, nutrients from food sources are more efficiently utilized by the body than isolated substances. For instance, fresh fruit and vegetable juice could be used to provide concentrated amounts of particular nutrients, such as vitamins A and C, to the diet. As another example, eating plenty of leafy green vegetables is a healthy option for those wishing to add calcium to the diet.

Vitamins and minerals are most easily digested with food. Fat-soluble vitamins should be taken with food that contains fat. Vitamins tend to work synergistically, meaning that they work together in order to be effective. For

contains fat. Vitamins tend to work synergistically, meaning that they work together in order to be effective. For instance, vitamin E requires some of the B-complex vitamins and the minerals selenium and zinc for most effective absorption. Some minerals may not be absorbed or may inhibit each other when taken in improper ratios. Generally, a high quality, broad-spectrum vitamin and mineral supplement will be formulated to prevent unfavorable interactions.

Vitamin A can become toxic when taken in large amounts (over 100,000 International Units) on a daily basis over time, as can vitamin D. Substituting beta-carotene for vitamin A can alleviate this risk. Very large doses of minerals taken over long periods may have toxic effects in the body. Dosages far exceeding RDA's of vitamins are not recommended, nor are large doses of other supplements.

Consumers can make wise choices for nutritional supplementation by consulting professional nutritionists and naturopathic physicians. Nutritional supplements are best added into the diet slowly, starting with small dosages and working up to the manufacturers' recommended amounts over time. Also, some supplements, such as herbal medications that may stimulate processes in the body, are best taken intermittently, allowing the body occasional rest periods without the supplement. To avoid unfavorable interactions, nutritional supplements are best used moderately and individually, rather than taking handfuls of capsules and tablets for various needs and conditions at the same time. Finally, consumers should be wary of excessive or grandiose health claims made by manufacturers of nutritional supplements and rely on scientific information to validate these claims.

Side effects

Some nutritional supplements can cause upset stomach and allergic reactions, including [rashes](#), flushing, nausea, sweating, and headaches.

Interactions

Herbal preparations and nutritional supplements may interact unfavorably with pharmaceutical drugs. For instance, some nutritional supplements recommended for nervous system function may not be recommended for those taking pharmaceutical antidepressants, such as taking 5-HTP, a nutritional supplement for the brain, or the herb St. John's Wort, with prescription antidepressants. Vitamin C should not be taken with aspirin, as it can irritate the stomach and limit absorption. Minerals should be taken in proper proportions to prevent unfavorable interactions; large amounts of zinc may deplete the body of the mineral copper, while too much calcium adversely affects the magnesium levels in the body. Balanced mineral supplements are recommended to alleviate these interactions.

Key terms

[Antioxidants](#) — A class of biochemicals that have been found to protect cells from free-radical damage.

[Enzymes](#) — Chemical catalysts that help initiate biochemical processes.

[Essential fatty acids](#) — Sources of fat in the diet, including omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids.

[Naturopathic physicians](#) — Physicians specializing in the treatment of disease using a variety of natural methods and plant-based medicines.

Resources

Books

Balch, Phyllis A. *Prescription for Nutritional Healing*. East Rutherford, NJ: Penguin Group Inc., 2005.

Firshein, Richard. *The Nutraceutical Revolution: 20 Cutting-Edge Nutrients to Help You Design Your Own Perfect Whole-Life Program*. East Rutherford, NJ: Penguin Group Inc., 1999.

Hudson, Tori. *Women's Encyclopedia of Natural Medicine*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1999.

Weil, Andrew. *Eating Well for Optimum Health: The Essential Guide to Bringing Health and Pleasure Back to Eating*. New York: Harper Trade, 2001.

Periodicals

Natural Health <http://www.naturalhealthmag.com>.

Organizations

Center for Science in the Public Interest. 1875 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20009. (202)332-9110. <http://www.cspinet.org>. Publishes *Nutrition Action Newsletter*.

National Nutritional Foods Association. 1220 19th Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20036. (202)223-0101. <http://www.nnfa.org>.

Other

USDA Food and Nutrition Information Center. <http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic>.

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Patient discussion about Nutritional Supplements.

Q. Is there any dietary supplement to prevent further hair loss? My hair is not growing now as it used to be before and to top it I suffer with hair fall. Today I did notice the hair fall while combing and this has put me in great worry. I can improvise on my dull hair but want to do something for the continuous hair loss. I need an immediate recovery. Is there any dietary supplement to prevent further hair loss?

A. Eating nutritious foods regularly will bring back your hair strength and shine and it will also stop hair fall. Take all the foods rich in essential fatty acid and vitamins like B6, B12. Foods like banana, dairy products, walnuts, almond, fish, and lentils are good for you hair. Protein is also required for a hair growth. Take care to have a good sleep as it helps in releasing the stress and it is very important for hair growth.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-LkBe4Rs-q8&url=http://www.imedix.com/health_community/v-LkBe4Rs-q8_bald_truth_hair_loss_fact_fiction_by_citihealth?q=hair%20loss&feature=player_embedded

Q. can anyone tell me what kind of dietary supplements I can have to control cold and cough? I often get severe cold and then try with meds to get rid of cold....now the frequency is very less and I get cold without any reason and the meds also didn't work for me.....can anyone tell me what kind of dietary supplements I can have to control cold and cough?

A. Hi Saloni. I would have to agree with the 3 other people that responded to your question. Vitamin C is a must for me which I take by capsule, 500 mg a day. If I do have a cold I increase it to 1,000 mg a day. It seems to lessen the severity of the cold. The brand I now take is Ester C as it is easier on the stomach and I have to watch my stomach. My daughter swears on Oil of Oregano but says you should take it regularly as a preventative. I have tried it but boy it has a nasty taste and I don't know if it will aggravate my stomach. I suffer with acid Reflux. When I was younger and had my first child, I was continually getting colds with a nasty cough and the doctor said it was bronchitis. After a year of it, the doctor put me on cold vaccine shots which finally did help me to get healthy again. I have a cold now and have taken a bunch of medicine. I didn't

which finally did help me to get healthy again. I have a cold now and have taken a cough medication 2 nights to help me stop the cough and to sleep. I believe getting enough sleep plays a very important part in our overall health so

Q. I want to live long, slim as well as handsome, is it possible to live off of nutrition supplements? I am slim and handsome even when I am not taking nutrition's much. But because of my peer and parents pressure I am forced to it. I am afraid that of becoming fat and ugly if I start eating more. But I want to live long, slim as well as handsome, is it possible to live off of nutrition supplements?

A. HELLO FRIEND,I HATE TO BREAK IT TO YOU, BUT EVERYONE CHANGES WITH AGE..THERE IS NO WAY OF GETTING AROUND IT,I SUGGEST YOU INJOY YOUR GOOD LOOKS,AND YOUR VAINNESS..WHILE YOU HAVE THEM....MRFOOT56

[Read more or ask a question about Nutritional Supplements](#)

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