**Supplements for Good Health** 11/17

Vitamin D is important to take; everything else is very iffy

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Most herbal and vitamin supplements have not held up to scrutiny in controlled trials, and some have turned out to be harmful. **Several studies linked multivitamins to an increase in cancer, among other problems.** Don’t believe the advertising claims: Multivitamins and many other supplements are not necessary for good health, and could be harmful. www.consumerlab.com/ is an excellent site for info on vitamins and herbs. Even Omega-3 capsules are now implicated in causing cancer. **Antioxidants (A, C and E) also have been linked to high rates of cancer.** **The only vitamin truly holding up to scrutiny is Vitamin D.**

**Vitamin D** is important for our skin and bones, and mayhelp fight hypertension and autoimmune diseases. Recently, adequate levels of vitamin D have been linked to lowered rates of cancer, especially colorectal cancer. People who live in cold climates are often low in Vitamin D, as they are not in the sun enough. Most need to take a vitamin D supplement. The latest studies suggest that adults need at least 2,000 International Units a day. Avoid the generic Vitamin D; use a name brand. The **Nature Made** brand available everywhere is USP-certified and is an excellent brand. If you take calcium with added D, you probably still need to take an extra D supplement. Do not take more than 4,000 units of vitamin D without consulting your physician. Vitamin D levels can be checked.

**Probiotics and Digestive Enzymes** help our GI tract as we get older. They may help with IBS. Probiotics may play a role in helping depression. We recommend 1 or 2 per day (in split doses). Good brands (at Walgreens): 1. Align and 2. RenewLife (30 billion). “Digestive Enzymes” may help as we get older. The usual dose is

1-to-4 per day. Typical brands are “Jarrow”, “NOW”, or “Enzymatic”, at Whole Foods.

**Omega-3s (Fatty Acids)**. Many studies have shown thebenefits of Omega-3s (natural, not capsules) for the heart, for moods, and possibly for headaches. Eating fish twice a week is a good goal, particularly fatty fish such as salmon, tuna, trout and mackerel. Other sources of Omega-3s in the diet are tofu, soybeans, walnuts, canola oil, and flaxseed. Flaxseed is excellent! It is better to get Omega-3s naturally than from supplements. In fact, the supplements have been linked to increased cancer rates. We do not recommend the Omega-3 supplements!

**Calcium** is necessary for the heart, muscles, and nerves tofunction and for blood to clot. Low intake of calcium leads to the development of osteoporosis and is associated with high rates of bone fractures. Absorption of calcium decreases as we age. Eating too much salt and protein, especially animal protein, increases calcium loss. It is better to get calcium in foods rather than in supplements. Calcium is found in milk, yogurt, cheese, broccoli, tofu, beans, sardines, calcium-enriched fruit juices, fortified cereals, etc. Our systems cannot absorb more than 500 mg. of calcium at a time. Calcium in the form of calcium citrate, such as Citrocal, is more easily absorbed than calcium carbonate. Citrocal Caplets plus D are a good form of calcium (315 mg.) plus vitamin D (200 IU). The usual dose is one or two tablets, once or twice a day; consult your physician. To learn more, visit [www.health.nih.gov](http://www.health.nih.gov).

**Aspirin**. If you are atrisk for heart disease, your doctor may recommend a daily dose of aspirin. Its properties may help prevent heart attacks, strokes, and even headaches and certain cancers. The usual dose is one aspirin (325 mg.) a day. Generic aspirin is fine. Taking a baby aspirin (81 mg.) or a half-tablet of regular aspirin (162 mg.) may be sufficient; the dose varies by person. Aspirin can cause stomach ulcers; if it hurts your stomach or causes heartburn, stop taking it and consult your doctor.

**Coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10)**, for people on **statins**, is a crucialcompound, important for your heart, muscles and nerves. It is naturally produced by your body. However, the statins (cholesterol-lowering drugs like Simvastatin, Lipitor, Pravachol, Vytorin and Crestor) deplete the body’s CoQ10. Studies have indicated a possible benefit from CoQ10 for migraine and the heart. We suggest taking 200mg to 400mg per day of CoQ10 if you take one of the statin drugs. It has not yet been proven that this helps the muscles, but CoQ10 is generally safe and may prevent headaches.

**Resources:** An excellent newsletter, Nutrition ActionHealth Letter, is $24 a year. Visit www.cspinet.org. A good website for healthy living is www.sparkpeople.com, with more than a million members. We also like www.consumerlab.com.

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