

Why Supplements ≠ Whole-Food Nutrition

Back in the 1960's, a popular television cartoon called "The Jetsons" illustrated a future in which the main characters drove flying cars, hired robot maids, pushed buttons to complete everyday tasks, and ate pills for dinner.

Fast forward to 2018, and the show that people laughed at as far-fetched was not far off base in its nutritional prophesy. In our light-speed society of immediate gratification and multitasking, many people are using supplements, bars, and protein shakes for the sake of convenience and to replace a healthy, whole food diet.

The 2017 CRN Consumer Survey on Dietary Supplements shows 76% of Americans are taking dietary supplements, and the SAD (Standard American Diet) consumed by most people does not even come close to the amount of vitamins and nutrients we should be getting through our food. We have lost touch with understanding where our food comes from—nature. That *really* is "SAD!" Just 12% of Americans eat the minimum daily fruit recommendation of one and a half to two cups per day, and only 9% consume the minimum daily vegetable recommendation of two to three cups per day.

Science demonstrates that combining a variety of healthy, whole foods provides complete balanced nutrients that are more easily absorbed by the human digestive system than pills and powders. Getting your nutrients from lean protein, fresh fruits and vegetables, heart-healthy fats, and whole grains not only provides the critical vitamins and minerals for your body to function optimally, but also offers a wealth of other benefits like fiber (for satiety and digestion), phytochemicals (which may lower your risk for certain diseases) and antioxidants (which may lower the risk for heart disease and cancer).

Nature packages its food perfectly in a way that all the vitamins, minerals and nutrients work together in harmony and *seamless interaction* with one another. For example, the vitamin C from an orange or potassium from a banana provide the perfect combination of fiber, carbs, and other vitamins and minerals. Our bodies have been used to eating and absorbing these nutrients this way for thousands of years...so why mess with nature?!

Grocery stores peddle processed foods full of sugar; pharmacies have aisles of vitamins and supplements which are not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration Act (so you may not know what you are putting into your body), and those "nutrition systems" you see on TV and online push powders and protein bars with unrecognizable ingredients in the name of good health and nutrition. These manmade supplements are not absorbed efficiently, and the vitamins and nutrients may conflict with each other, hampering the absorption process and negating their benefits in the first place...and supplements are expensive!

Here's the bottom line. Try to get most, if not all, of your nutritional requirements through a healthy diet consisting of whole foods. If your doctor confirms that you are lacking a certain nutrient, use a supplement, but don't overdo it. It is possible to have a nutrient toxicity from over-consuming a nutrient from food *and* supplementation.

Supplements should be a reinforcement to your whole foods-based diet--not the primary nutrition source—and if you eat healthfully, you may not need any at all!

Make a point to invest in quality whole foods. Visit your local farm or farmers market to experience where your food is coming from, eat locally, and enjoy all the seasonal fruits and vegetables. Take the time to cook and prepare your food, or when life gets too busy, purchase healthy “short-cut” foods (pre-chopped veggies, prepared quinoa, cooked chicken breasts, etc.) from your local market. That's still a better option than popping a pill. Just think, with your healthy eating and lifestyle maybe YOU will be around for flying cars!

References:

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