

Whole vs. Synthetic Vitamins

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According to Taber's Medical Dictionary, vitamins are essential for normal metabolism, growth and life of the body.¹ They are indispensable for the maintenance of health. Up until now there has been some contro-versy regarding the necessity to supplement vitamins back into the diet. The Journal of American Medical Association concluded from a study that every indi-vidual should take a multivitamin everyday, thus ending that controversy.²

Research has proven that your body begins to pay the price as it tries to compensate for nutrient deficiencies. Eventually, poor nutrition can lead to devastating consequences. According to the U.S. Surgeon General³ many people who get cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and other serious diseases, may have been able to avoid such illnesses if they had been receiving proper nutrition⁴ and exercise. Getting the proper nutrients and micronutrients each day is critical to maintaining good health

So now hundreds of supplement companies have looked to chemical derivatives and synthetic vitamins as a solution. The very logic of this seems irrational when you remember where vitamins come from. Vitamins are found in food, and just because current growing and processing methods have depleted the vitamins available from our foods, it does not mean that we should come up with new-fangled ways to get these micronutrients from some other source. Instead, we should look for a way to get more of the safe, effective vitamins that are available only from foods.

By using vitamin C as an example. Ascorbic acid is often sold as vitamin C, and yet it is only a chemically derived fraction of the whole food vitamin. As it is found in food, vitamin C is a complete complex which is actually made up of ascorbic acid plus rutin, bioflavonoids, K factor and J factors - as well as other substances that no human experiment has been able to replicate. You must have all of these fractions in order for the Vitamin to be complete.

In order for the body to absorb and use a vitamin, all of the parts of the complex must be present. That means that in order to use the fractionated form of the vitamin, the body must first supply the other parts of the whole food complex. If ascorbic acid alone is ingested, the body must complete the complex by robbing its own collagen tissue of the elements that are missing in the "vitamin C" you supplied.

This process is rarely complete and can even cause increased deficiencies. A published study by Doctors Vinson and Bose showed this to be the case. They found that vitamin C from citrus extract was absorbed 35 percent more than ascorbic acid. Their conclusion was that; "Although natural and synthetic ascorbic acids are chemically identical, citrus fruits contain bioflavonoids such as naringin and hesperidin as well as carbohydrates and proteins that might affect the bioavailability."⁵

Another study conducted at the University of Scranton found a "significantly greater effectiveness" of citrus extract than of synthetic ascorbic acid in slowing the progression of galactose cataracts. The citrus extract was 41 percent more effective.⁶

Likewise, other vitamins have been shown in study after study to be more effective in their whole food form. One study by J.A. Vinson and C. Hsu, published in Medical Science Research, found whole food vitamin E and vitamin A to be more bioavailable than isolated, synthetic forms of these vitamins. In the case of vitamin A, results showed the food base product was retained 9.4 times more than the synthetic form.⁷

Synthetic vitamins simply cannot measure up to the real thing. As of 1996, over 3,800 different compounds have been identified in foods as having nutritional significance.⁸ However, in a laboratory, twenty nutrients are about all that modern science can reproduce and put into a vitamin product.

Even more of a concern than the ineffectiveness of these synthetic vitamins is the harm that they can cause. In the case of vitamin E, large doses of the fractionated form (alpha-tocopherol) pull vitamins and minerals from the bones. Supplementation of the synthetic, alpha-tocopherol form of vitamin E showed harmful effects, including 18 percent higher incidence of lung cancer, more strokes, more heart attacks and an 8 percent increase in the overall death rate.⁹

Research also verifies that using just a fraction of vitamin A actually increases the risk of cancer. On the other hand, the whole food vitamin A, and foods containing vitamin A, has the opposite effect. The whole food form significantly reduces the risk of cancer.

A study done by Boston University School of Medicine and published in the New England Journal of Medicine showed that synthetic vitamin A given to pregnant women increased the risk of birth defects, including such defects as cleft lip, cleft palate, heart

malformations and nervous system damage.¹⁰ No such defects were noted from ingesting whole foods that contain vitamin A.

Fractionated vitamins actually produce a drug-like reaction in the body. They stimulate increased activity of nerve cells and increase blood sugar pickup. This brings a feeling of euphoria and can create a temporary increase in energy but long term damage to the body.

One of the latest studies was on Vitamin C as synthetic ascorbic acid. It was found to thicken the walls of the arteries, a condition known as atherosclerosis. Researchers from the Institute for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention found that of the 573 men and women studied, those who regularly took vitamin C pills as Ascorbic Acid alone developed an inner artery wall layer 2.5 times thicker than that of people who did not take synthetic supplements.

With all this evidence to support whole food vitamins, why do you think companies continue to make and market the “cheap imitations”? The answer: Because they are cheap. However, while these companies may save money and make more profit, there is no way the synthetic forms can match the effectiveness and health promoting qualities of a whole food vitamin. The human cell recognizes and can use for fuel, repair and function, only natural, whole food complexes.

Whole food vitamins do not rob precious nutrients from the body, but supply the individual cells with the nutrients they need to flourish. For greatest gains in terms of health, take only whole food vitamins. When evaluating a vitamin supplement, you can simply read the label. Rather than multi-syllable, unpronounceable chemical names, you should find the names of foods listed as the vitamin sources. Remember, next to the name of any vitamin, if you don't see a name of a food or an asterisk leading you to a place on the label that tells you the food source of the vitamins, you are more than likely looking at an inexpensive, processed vitamin that is stripped of all other compounds that are normally present with vitamins that are found in fruits and vegetables. If you see the name of a food referenced to the vitamin, be excited to know that you are getting vitamins direct from the whole food and, therefore, you are also getting the essential precursors, enzymes, activators, antioxidants, and micronutrients (essential compounds) that are naturally found with vitamins. These essential compounds make it much easier for the body to absorb and utilize the vitamins you are taking. Your body deserves to be given the right vitamins that are

essential for your good health! Whole vitamins nutritionally support people who are challenged with the effects of stress, obesity, aging, acne/skin disorders, arthritis, diabetes, osteoporosis, sleep deprivation, cancer, heart disease, memory loss, poor vision, lack of energy, depression, and other health concerns.

Eating healthy, getting the proper nutrients, annual medical checkups, and exercise are all critical in keeping the body strong and healthy. Many people who begin to take vitamin supplements also start a workout program. It is suggested that you get a physical by your doctor before you start any exercise program to insure that you will be around for years to come.

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