

Dietary Supplements and a Healthy Diet

Health and wellness has become a popular goal for many people. A main component of health is your diet, and in some cases, dietary supplements. The media continually offer the latest findings on beneficial foods, supplements and food-related medical research. The trick is to view this information with a discriminating eye. Many times, these "health reports" share biased information that is general in nature and not specific to an individual patient's needs.

When health reports mention a drug or even exercise, they usually caution that you should talk to your doctor to find out what is right for you. However, when they discuss herbs or other nutritional supplements, they rarely mention that you should talk to a certified herbalist, nutritionist or physician. Before you take any dietary supplement or herb, it is imperative that you learn what you are taking, and what it can and cannot accomplish.

Dietary supplements can be divided into six main categories: vitamins; antioxidants; minerals; nutraceuticals; homeopathics; and herbs. Vitamins are complex organic compounds that are naturally present in food and are essential to proper functioning of the body. Antioxidants are also organic compounds used by the body that are found in food. Some vitamins are antioxidants, but not all antioxidants are vitamins. Minerals, like iron and calcium, are inorganic compounds found in food and needed by the body. All of these compounds are used in different ways in the body. Some facilitate chemical process, others like calcium become part of the structure of the body.

Vitamins, antioxidants and minerals can be supplemented, but are best introduced to the body by a well-balanced diet.

Herbs are extreme foods, such as ginseng. The difference between foods and herbs is in the usage. Herbs are not always plants as commonly believed. Herbs are often foods that we don't typically use as foods, or don't use in a medicinal quantity. Herbs are traditionally mixed together to cause a specific change in the body, whereas food is prepared to provide nourishment. For example, chicken soup for dinner is a food. Chicken soup with extra spices, given to a child with a cold who is not hungry, should be considered herbal medicine.

Homeopathics are dilutions of medicinal substances that are used to help the body to respond to a problem. Homeopathy is a medical system based on identifying a substance that will get the body to react in a way that helps the person overcome the condition. A person trained in the medicine of Homeopathy is your best source of information on what products are best for you.

Nutraceuticals are chemical compounds that don't fit in any of the above categories. Derived from synthetic and natural sources, some nutraceuticals are found naturally in the body and are often not a normal part of a typical diet. Usually there is some research to indicate that people find benefit from artificially adding these compounds to the body, such is the case with Glucosamine or digestive enzymes.

Simply because dietary supplements are



Bock Acupuncture & Herbal Medicine

Ancient wisdom for our modern age

David Bock C.Ac., Dipl.OM., FABORM

Wisconsin Certified Acupuncturist,
National Board Certified (NCCAOM) in
Oriental Medicine, Acupuncture,
Herbal Medicine and Asian Body Work.
Fellow American Board of Oriental Reproductive Medicine

888 Thackeray Trail #206
Oconomowoc WI 53066
(262) 567-1309
www.davidbocktcm.com

Dietary Supplements and a Healthy Diet

available without a prescription does not mean that they are harmless. Supplements can be used improperly and cause damage. When using supplements, first be sure it is appropriate for you. Your individual health needs should be examined and determined by a medical professional who is trained in ways to determine what type of supplementation you need.

Another issue to consider is dosage. Vitamins are essential, but they are also toxic at high levels. Pay attention to labels. Vitamins mixed with herbs can be problematic because herbs are not essential to the body. Herbs are not vitamins - they are medicine. These mixtures may be safe, but have the potential of delivering unnecessary herbs along with the vitamins, or providing an overdose of vitamins to get desired amount of herbs.

Herbs, in traditional Chinese medicine, are mixed to control negative side effects that the herbs might have. Rarely used alone, herbs were historically part of a mixture specific to the patient's needs and balanced by diet and lifestyle modifications. Many over-the-counter herb mixtures are a combination of popular herbs with no regard as to whether those herbs actually work well together. Again, talk to a certified herbalist to find out what you should or should not use. Remember that like drugs, herbs are medicine; and like chicken soup, should be used only as long as needed.

Do not use supplements without a doctor's consent. Be especially careful if you are on any blood thinning medication, such as Coumadin, or any medication that has food-related cautions. Just like foods, some supplements can interfere with the absorption of medication into the blood stream or interfere with the effectiveness of a medication.

Beware of the exotic cure-all. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. You can have too much of a good thing. Supplements are just that - a supplement to health. They are meant to help your body function better. Too much help can cause problems; just as too much food, even good food, can make you fat. Wellness is a noble pursuit in life, just be sure to do it correctly for your life.



Bock Acupuncture & Herbal Medicine

Ancient wisdom for our modern age

David Bock C.Ac., Dipl.OM., FABORM

Wisconsin Certified Acupuncturist,
National Board Certified (NCCAOM) in
Oriental Medicine, Acupuncture,
Herbal Medicine and Asian Body Work.
Fellow American Board of Oriental Reproductive Medicine

888 Thackeray Trail #206
Oconomowoc WI 53066
(262) 567-1309

www.davidbocktcm.com