

## VITAMINS & MINERALS

### Are You Just Throwing Your Money Away?

By: Dr. Brandon Crouch

**B**illions are spent on vitamins and minerals every year. Vitamins and minerals are nutrients in the human body that allow for normal function, strengthening the immune system, growth, and development. With such a huge payout there are three big questions that must be answered. Is your health improved by taking daily vitamins and minerals? Is your vitamin brand (manufacturer) any good? Lastly, are we making a wise investment with our money or just throwing it away?

To answer the first question, do vitamins and minerals really *improve* our health; we need to travel back in time to the era of World War II. It was the early 1940's when a committee, later renamed as the "Food and Nutrition Board", was established by the United States of National Academy of Sciences. Initially the committee was formed to investigate areas of nutrition that could affect national defense. Later, they created recommendations for the standard daily allowances for each nutrient. These recommendations are now known as the "Recommended Dietary Allowance" or RDA.

The RDA was created with good intent, but do they actually promote health and prevent chronic illnesses? In 1989, the summary report on the RDAs stated, "The RDAs are the levels of intake of essential nutrients that, on the basis of scientific knowledge, are judged by the Food and Nutrition Board to be adequate to meet the known nutrient needs of practically *all healthy persons.*" "For certain nutrients, the requirement may be the amount that will prevent failure of a specific function or the development of specific deficiency signs – *an amount that may differ greatly from that required to maintain body stores*" (emphasis added)<sup>1</sup>.

To summarize, **the recommendations made by the RDA were not designed to promote the requirements for optimum nutrition, but** instead were meant only to define the lower limits of daily nutrient intake so as **to avoid acute nutritional deficiencies**. Furthermore, the RDA levels were based on "all healthy persons," meaning they are not overweight, lead stress free lives, have no medical problems, eat well balanced diets, and consumes 4-5 servings of fruits and vegetables every day. Needless to say, but most of us do not fit into this definition of a "healthy person." Nearly all Americans are deficient even in the minimal RDA requirements and therefore weaken the body's normal physiological processes that lead to sickness and disease. This is why more and more doctors are recommending an **Optimal Daily Allowance** vitamin to help *improve* health.

The second question, if you are currently taking vitamins, is your vitamin brand (manufacturer) any good? Vitamins and minerals are not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The good news about this is that you do not need a doctor's prescription to buy your vitamins. The bad news about this is that the manufacturers (and there are many) all have different quality and control practices that are not regulated. This has led to shelf after shelf of poor quality vitamins and minerals that have poor ingredients, added fillers, added sugars, uncontrolled potencies, potential toxicities, poor absorption rates, etc. (Thus a waste of money!)

So how do you know if your brand of vitamins are any good? In my office, I utilize a 191 page book titled "Nutrsearch Comparative Guide To Nutritional Supplements, Fourth Edition, Professional Edition". It is a comprehensive review of over 1500 vitamin and mineral products. Each product is compared on 18 different criteria and then ranked on a 5 star rating system. A 5 star rating indicates the product achieves the criteria for optimum nutrition and is superior to the majority of products on the market. Conversely, a 1 star rating or less means the product contains few, if any, of the characteristics for optimal nutrition.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, **many** of the popular well advertised brands sold rank 1 star or less.

Here is a small list from MacWilliam's Comparative Guide<sup>1</sup>:

NAME	RATING	Page, MacWilliam's
21 <sup>st</sup> Century One Daily Active	.05	131
Arbonne Complete Essentials for Women I	1.0	131
Centrum Silver	.05	132
CVS Pharmacy Daily Multiple for Men	.05	133
Equate One Daily Men's	.05	134
Nature Made Essential Women	.05	139
One A Day Women's	-	141
Rite Aid One Daily Men's Multi	.05	143
Target Multivitamin/Multimineral	-	145
Vitasmart Complete Senior	.05	147
Walgreens A thru Z Advantage	.05	147

\*\*This is not a complete list of all manufactures. Additionally, this is not meant to be a complete list of all products compared by the represented manufactures in this list. To see the full selection of products compared consult MacWilliam's Nutrsearch Comparative Guide<sup>1</sup>

I encourage my patients to choose a manufacturer who has an **overall average star rating** (of the products compared) of 3 stars or higher. Additionally, the **specific product** they choose should rate at least 3 stars or higher. By following these guidelines

you will ensure a great top quality product from a top quality manufacturer that achieves optimal nutritional characteristics.

The third question to answer, are you investing in your health or are you throwing your money away? There are “experts” out there who tell you not to worry about taking vitamins and minerals if you are eating a well balanced diet. Unfortunately, the ability to get nutrient rich, unprocessed foods into our diets every day is difficult at best. Taking an Optimal Daily Allowance Vitamin and Mineral supplement is crucial to promote health and prevent chronic illness.

**Here are just a few studies illustrating the importance of vitamins and minerals:**

1. A study published in the American Journal of Medicine states that C-reactive protein (CPR) an independent risk factor for **cardiovascular disease**, is reduced by daily intake of a multivitamin.<sup>2</sup>
2. A Univ. of Arizona Study demonstrated that taking 200 micrograms of selenium every day for 4 ½ years **cut cancer rate** by 42% and cancer deaths in half in a group of 1300 individuals. The incidence of colorectal cancer dropped 64% while prostate cancer dropped 69%.<sup>3</sup>
3. Harvard Researchers found that the long term dietary intake of folate and Vitamin B12 may help **decrease the risk of ischemic stroke**. Ischemic stroke is the most common form of stroke.<sup>4</sup>
4. A two year study demonstrated that Vitamin C may **prevent symptoms linked to airway diseases such as asthma, cystic fibrosis, and COPD** (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease).<sup>5</sup>

The best investment you can make in yourself and the health of your family is in a good optimal daily allowance vitamin and mineral supplement. They are essential to promote optimum health and to prevent chronic illness. To keep from wasting your money make sure that the manufacturer – brand you choose is reputable and actually does put out good quality products. Just because they are marketed heavily on television or have the best price tag does not mean they are worth the plastic bottle they come in. Make the most of your health and choose the best vitamins available for you and your family!

About the Author:

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Sources:

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