

Caution urged when deciding to take supplements

By Mandy Kendall

I was invited to join a meeting of the Lake Tahoe Business Referral Network this week and met a great group of like-minded business owners doing great things for business in our community. During my short presentation I decided not only to introduce the Health Connective – a great group of natural health practitioners also doing wonderful things for our community – but also to talk briefly about another subject close to my heart – supplements.

Research has revealed that a lot of people fall under the category of “I think I should be taking supplements, but I don’t know what I need or which ones to take” or, if they are already taking supplements, the general consensus seems to be “I’m not sure if I’m taking what I need or if they are doing me any good?”.



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Surveys conducted in more than 4,000 health practitioner’s offices revealed that 85 percent of patients wanted their health care provider to advise them on supplementation.

Interestingly, people who do take supplements often use a variety of methods to choose which supplement and brand to use, including criteria such as: “I saw it on TV”, “I liked

the label”, and “it was the cheapest”.

While these may be the ways we choose many of the products we use in our lives, when it comes to our health it might be prudent to take a little more expert advice.

So where do you start? It seems every day someone is telling us that something we were told last year is good for us is now on the bad for you list. There are so many supplements to choose from, all seeming to claim to be just what you need for complete health.

Then if you know which supplement you should be taking there are so many different brands. So it's hardly surprising that some ignore the supplement issue all together, or base their choices on random criteria.

So why take supplements at all?

Medications deplete some nutrients – According to the University of Maryland Medical Center, statins appear to deplete the body of Coenzyme Q10, necessary for the production of ATP, which is the major energy source of human cells. This tends to require supplementation in addition to a balanced diet containing foods such as salmon, tuna, organ meats and some whole grains. Some studies also indicate that Coenzyme Q10 supplementation can help with the muscle pain sometimes experienced when taking statins. However, always check with your doctor for any possible supplement/medication interactions

Essential nutrients – Some nutrients are called ‘essential’ which indicates that they cannot be made by the body so must be obtained through food or supplements. Omega 3 fatty acids are considered essential for health, and by themselves can raise HDL (good cholesterol) and lower triglycerides (high levels can lead to risk of heart disease). In children these fatty acids are ‘essential’ for brain development and immune function and there are studies that claim some behavioral

issues can be linked to an Omega 3 deficiency. Foods high in Omega 3 include cold water and oily fish, some nuts and some vegetables. As there probably aren't too many kids keen on any of these foods it could be wise to consider a good Omega 3 supplement.

Overfed and undernourished – Today's fast-paced lifestyles are leading to an array of poor dietary choices and chronically stressful lives, with convenience diets that provide too many calories with too few nutrients. Couple that with overfarming of land, and the mass production of food worldwide, and the nutritional value of food is not as high as it used to be. In today's world, we tend to be missing some of the valuable nutrients our bodies need.

Stress – Affects the body's metabolism like an engine racing in a high gear. The increased metabolism can cause an increase in the use, and excretion of, many nutrients such as vitamins A, C, D, E, K, and B complex, and minerals such as magnesium, calcium, phosphorus, chromium, selenium, zinc, and potassium. If these are not replaced we can become deficient, however the effects of these deficiencies tend not to be obvious until a disease or condition manifests.

Lifestyle – Smoking and alcohol (yes, I'm afraid that means wine, too) cause a deficiency of a number of nutrients in the body. Thiamine, Zinc and Niacin (vitamin B3) perform a wide range of functions in the body, including aiding memory, DNA processes, and brain functioning and are all detrimentally affected by alcohol. Smoking drains the body of many essential vitamins and minerals. For example vitamin C, one of the body's natural antioxidants (which mop up free radicals that harm our cells), is drawn from tissues and blood to help counteract the effects of smoking. This deficiency leads to low absorption of iron and the reduction of antioxidant protection can lead to the onset of numerous diseases. Smokers are generally advised to increase their daily intake of Vitamin C to 2000mg which generally cannot be achieved through

diet alone, therefore requiring a supplement. (That said, no amount of supplements or antioxidants can protect the body against the damage caused by smoking.)

All supplements are not created equal – Everything from ingredients, types of processing used, to the delivery mechanism (tablets versus liquids) will affect how effective a supplement is. Isotonic formulas (liquids easily absorbed by the body) tend to be four to five times more effective than tablets because of the digestive process required to break down tablets, which often results in some of the tablet passing through the entire body without being digested at all. The quality of ingredients is also an important consideration and often will make the product seem more expensive, but ultimately worth it.

So, as you can see, there are many considerations when choosing a supplement. Everyone's supplement requirements are going to be very different, based on the huge variations of lifestyle, health and environment. So it is advisable to seek advice from a medical or licensed professional, familiar with your situation, who will assess your particular needs and help determine what supplements are best for you.

The Health Connective strives to support its community in all natural health and wellness issues, so please contact us at healthconnective@gmail.com if you have any questions, or would like any further information, about the article above.

Until next time.

Mandy Kendall operates Health Connective in South Lake Tahoe. If you have any questions, would like some advice, or would like to request some Qwik-e tips on any health and wellbeing topic, please feel free to drop me an email at healthconnective@gmail.com, visit us on Facebook, or keep an eye out on Lake Tahoe News for regular Qwik-e tips on how to make healthy changes one Quick and Easy step at a time.

