

Four Nutritional Supplements Everyone Should Take

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There's a lot of hype out there, and a lot of conflicting information. The nutritional supplement aisle at the health food store can be downright overwhelming. So how do you decide what supplements you should be taking?



It turns out that there are certain nutrients that are generally undersupplied even in a well-balanced diet. The following recommendations assume that you already 1) avoid processed foods, white sugar and flour, 2) consume 5-9 servings of fruits and veggies per day, and 3) are basically healthy, and looking to optimize your health and prevent disease. With those disclaimers in mind, consider taking the following four supplements:

1. **A Multivitamin and Mineral.** Our food isn't nearly as nutrient-dense as it used to be even a couple decades ago. There are many reasons for this, but the bottom line is that even with a relatively good diet, most of us are chronically vitamin and mineral depleted. However, **not all multivitamins are created equal** – some are highly absorbable and some of them are a waste of money. Check with a professional to tell the difference.
2. **Essential Fatty Acids.** The most common source of these are fish oils, but EFAs can also be found in high concentrations in Krill oil, flax seed oil, and cod liver oil. The two EFAs to pay attention to are **Omega 3 and Omega 6**, but the former is more important for supplementation because the Standard American Diet tends to be many times higher in Omega 6 than Omega 3 (leading to an inflammatory imbalance). Across the population, average dietary intake of EFAs in North America tends to be around 100 mg per day, whereas healthy individuals should get around 500 mg of EFAs daily. **Look for EFAs that say "Pharmaceutical Grade" on the bottle**, as these have been tested for environmental contaminants.
3. **Antioxidants.** We know that oxidative stress is a mediating factor in heart disease, diabetes, cancer, Alzheimer's disease, and chronic inflammatory diseases, and it is postulated to be a major contributor to cellular aging as well. Antioxidants neutralize the free radicals that cause oxidative stress. Many nutrients are considered to be antioxidants, but most important are those found throughout the body (called "endogenous"), and those that are capable of regenerating other antioxidants. **Find a complex that contains NAC (N-Acetyl Cysteine), ALA (Alpha Lipoic Acid), and CoQ10.** There are also specific antioxidants which may be important for a given condition, but it's best to check with your naturopathic doctor which ones are right for you.
4. **Probiotics.** These are friendly microflora that help you to digest your food and contribute substantially to your immune system. Although it may seem unnatural to supplement with microorganisms, people once consumed a much higher volume of fermented foods (and therefore of probiotics) than they do today. **Look for a probiotic with 20 billion organisms at about a 50/50 ratio of Lactobacillus and Bifidobacterium**, as these are the organisms that make up the majority of your gut flora, at about that ratio.

Again, this advice assumes an otherwise healthy individual. Those who are fighting an infection may have much higher nutrient needs for a limited time, and those with a preexisting diagnosis may have ongoing needs over and above these recommendations.



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