

Scott Godwin's Quick Guide to Supplements

For more information
Scott Godwin
scott@scottgodwin.net
www.scottgodwin.net



Real Food is Always Better Than Supplements

Rule #1 For Supplements

There is no replacement for real food.

Vitamin and food supplements are big business in America, raking in over \$6 billion dollars per year, and this number increases every year. Everyone wants a simple solution and everyone wants to be healthy, so it's logical to reach for a supplement, especially if it's cheap. Unfortunately, the primary problem

with the supplement business is that it is poorly regulated. The US Federal Government / FDA does not monitor supplement companies in an in-depth way, and there are laws protecting supplement businesses from deeper scrutiny. Supplement companies have lobbyists, and lobbyists work hard to protect the companies they work for.

Besides the fact that you don't know for certain if what you're getting in the supplement bottle actually is what it says it is, there may also be problems with toxicity. A recent study showed that many supplements don't contain what they say they contain and even contain toxic compounds. Another showed, as an example, an increased chance of liver failure with Green Tea Extract Supplementation.

Via Negativa, Again.

Why would you take a supplement you weren't sure about? If you didn't know if it might hurt you or not, why would you risk it? One of the best ways to stay healthy is to avoid things which are harmful. As we covered before, the first principle of health care is the "The Hippocratic Oath" is to *do no harm*. Supplements could do harm.

Safety comes before everything else, or at least it should. When you think about how to be healthy with food your main concern should be the basics. It's amazing that a billion-dollar supplement and nutrition industry can complicate something that is pretty simple. Supplements do have a small place in the big picture, but food should be your primary focus.

Real food has several things that a supplement doesn't:

- Fiber - Fiber makes you feel full, keeps you regular, and helps curb your appetite and as a result helps you lose weight.
- Phytochemicals - Plants are made up of various chemicals, called phytochemicals, which help in defense against competitors, pathogens, or predators. Phytochemicals are still being researched but are thought to have health benefits and some researchers even believe that the main benefit of eating vegetables and fruits is the phytochemicals.
- Calories - This is the obvious one, but vitamin supplements don't give you any actual calories for energy.
- Fun- It's much more fun to try new foods and eat than it is to pop a pill.
- Taste- Eating is a great joy.
- Digestion / Absorption - Vitamins, minerals, and nutrients (fat, carbohydrates, and proteins) work together to boost absorption so it's necessary to eat real food to get the full effect of these compounds.
- Less Toxicity - Again, you never know for sure what you're getting with a supplement. At least with real food, you know what you're eating.

There are a few minor advantages of supplements in some cases:

- Absorption - In some cases, vitamins are sold in combinations, like Vitamin D and Calcium, to enhance absorption.
- Convenience - If you're traveling, or sick, or in a stressful environment it may be helpful to boost your immunity through supplementation.

Always remember to focus on food, not supplements. No amount of supplementation and expensive health care treatment can overcome a poor diet and unhealthy lifestyle. Enjoy a fresh salad, a handful of strawberries, sweet potato, or some roasted almonds. Delicious!

Rule # 2 for Supplements:

If you're going to take a supplement, make sure it is what it says it is, and more importantly that it's safe.

Back when it was discovered that Omega - 3 Fatty Acids could benefit the heart and brain, as well as have an overall anti-inflammatory effect, use of fish oil supplements, which contain Omega 3 fatty acids, understandably exploded. One reason for this is that the amount of research available (the sample size) was pretty small at the time on how effective these supplements were. So what research we did have seemed to indicate that these supplements were close to being miracle drugs. Once the research started piling up, the data started to show that they might not be that effective.

(This small sample size phenomena is quite common and is like a commercial on TV which says '4 out of 5 doctors recommend X product'. The next logical questions would be "which 5 doctors?" And "why not 800 out of 1000 doctors?"

Effectiveness is one thing, and we will cover that, but even more important is safety. The most important thing about the supplements you take, other than remembering that they don't replace healthy eating, which was Rule #1, is thatthey are what they say they are and that they are safe. This is no small task. The FDA tests drugs for safety (which brings up a whole other book-worthy discussion for a later time), but they don't test supplements.

We're all busy, and even being in the health & wellness field, supplements are not something I paid that close attention to for a long time. The good news is that it takes only a few minutes to figure this out, and I'm cutting out the leg work for you. According to my research, I would look for these 4 symbols, which I found on Consumer Reports and trust:



4 of the available certification of quality seals available for supplements

There may be other good supplement companies out there, but if you see one of these symbols, you at least know that the

companies have paid to have the supplements tested for quality and contamination, which is essential.

Rule # 3 for Supplements:

Test & Proceed with Caution.

Nutrition is an over-the-top business in America. If buying complicated supplements and obsessing about what you eat is something you're at least passingly familiar with, in your life or someone you know, you aren't alone. Billions are spent every year on nutrition media, organic food, "health" food, "natural" food, and nutritional supplements. You can even buy organic, farm-to-table, vegetarian, gluten-free food and vitamins for your dog too. Unfortunately, most of this money is wasted, on our dogs and ourselves. Like most things, we can take our emphasis on trying to eat healthy to the extreme.

Healthy nutrition is not that complicated.

A little background: Eat mostly fruits and vegetables, especially vegetables. Shoot for 5 - 6 servings per day. If it has a peeling, don't waste your money on organic, because it doesn't matter. Regardless, wash all your fruit and vegetables well, unless it has a peeling, in which case it doesn't matter.

As far as rule 3, below is how you can determine whether you need specific supplements.

First, it is very difficult to test for vitamin deficiencies. It can be done, but it must be done by someone who knows what they're doing. I am personally very skeptical about vitamin and

mineral testing, but would trust a reputable physician to test for Iron, Vitamin D, and possibly B Vitamins. Blood tests for vitamin deficiencies are not validated well, and may or may not be accurate. It's much more reasonable in my opinion to look for symptoms or problems.

Here are some tests you can use to determine if you may have a Vitamin or Mineral deficiency, and a few tips:

- Getting colds and allergies often? - Consider supplementing with Vitamin C and Vitamin D, and with a probiotic, which might boost your immunity.
- Constipation? - Consider adding fiber to your diet through oatmeal, whole grains, raw veggies, or fiber supplements.
- Muscle cramps? - You may be lacking potassium, calcium, or magnesium, which you can get from your diet. Prescription medications can contribute to the problem.
- Brittle hair and nails? -This can be caused by low Biotin.
- Dry Skin? -Vitamin A can help with this. Consider a low dose supplement.
- Mouth sores? - Can be caused by low Vitamin B6.
- Irritability, depression, loss of balance- Vitamin B12 can be a factor.

- Try pressing on your chest. If your skin is swelling and has a crater where you pressed, you may be low on Vitamin D.
- When you get a physical, ask to test for vitamin deficiencies. Your doctor should be able to.
- Assess your bloodwork for other factors other than, and in addition to, vitamin and mineral testing, such as white blood cells and red blood cells, and try to seek suggestions, even if the direct information about specific vitamins is lacking. You may also be able to get a hair test for Iron deficiency.
- Take a reputable and verified multi-vitamin every day to fill in the gaps.
- Check your medications carefully. Most of them have side effects that could contribute to vitamin or mineral loss.

I'd like to write a best-selling book on the "secrets" of nutrition and supplements, if there were any secrets. I've studied the topic of nutrition for years and I can tell you, it's mostly a show. It's an entertainment and a diversion. The last thing the world needs is another fad diet book, or "secrets of nutrition" book. Don't get me wrong, someone will do this and become famous. But trust me, save your money. Use these simple guidelines instead.

I've tried to keep this review of supplements as brief as possible. The bottom line is that you probably don't need much

in the way of supplementation, and if you do, you should be careful what you take.

The supplement business is full of quacks who are out to make a buck. Vitamin supplements are overly relied on and usually aren't needed. There is not 100% conclusive proof that they are beneficial in the long run, but this is difficult to prove one way or the other. The most important factor is safety. Don't take it if you don't need it. Here are some things you can do though:

- Talk to your doctor about what supplements may be appropriate for you.
- Omega 3 Fatty Acids, or Fish Oil Capsules, may be good for you and help with inflammation in general. You can also get this is healthy fats like avocados, nuts, olives, and eating fish.
- A multi-vitamin is fine, and can cover the gaps.
- Herbal supplements like Ginger, Turmeric, and Garlic may be good for inflammation.
- Co-Q 10 may have some cardiovascular benefits.
- Supplementing with Vitamin C, as an anti-oxidant, might be helpful in times of stress or if exposed to radiation. An interesting recommendation made by some doctors is to supplement Vitamin C, or eat something that contains it,

when you eat meat. The idea is that it counteracts the negative effects of charred meats.

- Vitamin D is crucial to many different things like cellular metabolism and bone strength. You can be tested for deficiency.
- Eating fermented foods like Kraut or Yogurt, or taking a probiotic may improve your immune system and digestive regularity significantly.
- Fiber supplements can be used for regularity.
- Calcium supplements may be useful for post-menopausal females.
- Protein supplementation is not usually needed, but if you want to add some in, remember that the most your body can process healthily is about 1- 1.5 times your bodyweight in kilograms, which for a 200 pound man is 91-135 grams per day. Take your bodyweight and divide by 2.2, which is your weight in kilograms, then multiply this number by 1 and 1.5 to find your maximum protein range.

So one more time:

Rule 1) Focus on real food.

Rule 2) If you take a supplement make sure it is what it says it is, and that it's safe.

Rule 3) Test to see what you need and then proceed with caution.