

Top 5 Vitamin Picks

Nutritionist Goulda Downer, RD, PhD, gives us the scoop on supplement.

February 16, 2006 By Goulda Downer, RD, PhD

A balanced diet can help us obtain many essential nutrients. But even health-conscious eaters may get less nourishment than they think. Farming practices often deplete soil of nutrients, and our bodies' needs change with age and stress levels.

While they don't compensate for an inadequate diet, supplements can fill in gaps. I suggest that everyone take a multivitamin, calcium, and folic acid (B complex) supplements, and vitamins D and E. Generics are generally equivalent to more costly name brands, so choose a price range that suits your wallet. Look for the USP designation-which means the product is safe, pure, and potent. Here are some products I like.

Supplement: Multivitamin

Ingredients to look for: A combo. Men and postmenopausal women: Choose under 8 mg of iron to cut heart-disease risk.

Body functions it supports: Helps build tissue and maintain metabolic functioning

Symptoms if deficient: General malaise and fatigue

Daily Dose: Varied

Brand I Like: Walgreens A thru Z

Price: \$6.99/100 tablets

Supplement: Calcium

Ingredients to look for: Calcium (avoid bonemeal, dolomite and shell sources, which may contain metals) with vitamin D

Body functions it supports: Guards against osteoporosis; builds and maintains bones and teeth; assists with metabolic functions

Symptoms if deficient: Growth deficiency, osteoporosis

Daily Dose: 1,200 mg

Brand I Like: Citracal

Price: \$7.90/60 tablets

Supplement : Folic Acid (B Complex)

Ingredients to look for: Folic acid, folate or folacin

Body functions it supports: Helps form hemoglobin and prevent birth defects; may reduce risk

of heart disease, cancer and stroke

Symptoms if deficient: Anemia, birth defects

Daily Dose: 400 mcg

Brand I Like: CVS B complex with B12 and B6

Price: \$6.99/100 tablets

Supplement: Vitamin D

Ingredients to look for: Calcitrol

Body functions it supports: Builds and maintains bone tissue; helps treat osteoporosis

Symptoms if deficient: Malformation of skeletal tissue, osteoporosis

Daily Dose: 400 IU

Brand I Like: Nature's Bounty

Price: \$4.39/100 tablets

Supplement: Vitamin E

Ingredients to look for: Alpha tocopherol

Body functions it supports: A strong antioxidant that prevents tissue breakdown

Symptoms if deficient: Damaged red blood cells, muscle tissue breakdown

Daily Dose: 400 IU

Brand I Like: Nature Made

Price: \$6.56/100 tablets