24 Reasons to Supplement

Many people believe that eating a well balanced diet provides all the vitamins and minerals necessary for good health. In ideal circumstances this is the case but in reality there are many reasons why you need vitamin supplements to cope with living in our current environment. Taking vitamins when required is a safe method to optimise your dietary sources of nutrients, providing you follow the instructions on product labels.

1) Poor digestion:

Even when your food intake is good, inefficient digestion can limit your body's uptake of vitamins. The two common causes of inefficient digestion are:
not chewing well enough or
eating too fast
Both of these result in larger-than-normal food size, too large to allow the complete action of digestive enzymes. Many people with dentures are unable to chew as those with a full set of original teeth.

2) Hot Coffee, Tea and Spices

Habitual drinking of liquids that are too hot or consuming an excess of irritants such as coffee, tea, spices or even pickles can cause inflammation of the digestive linings. This results in a drop in secretion of digestive fluids and poorer extraction of vitains and minerals from food.

3) Alcohol

Drinking to much alcohol is known to damage the liver and pancreas, which are vital to digestion and metabolism. It can also damage the lining of the intestinal tract and adversely affect the absorption of nutrients, leading to sub-clinical malnutrition.
Regular heavy use of alcohol increases the body's need for the water soluable B-Group vitamins as well as Vitamins A, C and B12. That's not all! Alcohol affects availability, absorption and metabolism of nutrients.

4) Smoking

Smoking tobacco is also an irritant to the digestive tract and increases the need for Vitamin C by at least 30%. Normally present in fruits and some vegetables, Vitamin C oxidises rapidly after the food is picked, cut, juiced, cooked or stored near direct light or heat. Vitamin C is also vital for good immunity.

5) Laxatives

Overuse of laxatives can result in poor absorption of vitamins and minerals from food by speeding up the intestinal transit time. Paraffin and other mineral oils increase losses of fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E and K. Other laxatives used to excess tend to flush large amounts of the essential minerals like sodium, potassium and magnesium.

6) Fad Diets

Bizarre diets that eliminate whole groups of food can be seriously lacking in vitamins. Even the popular low-fat diets, if taken to an extreme, can be deficient in Vitamins A, D and E. Vegetarian diets which exclude any animal sources must be skilfully planned to avoid a B12 deficiency which may lead to anaemia.

7) Overcooking – 'Murder in the Kitchen!'

Lengthy cooking or reheating of meat and vegetables can oxidise and destroy heat sensitive vitamins such as the B-group, C and E. Boiling vegetables leaches the water-soluable B-group and C vitamins as well as many minerals. Light steaming is preferable. Some vitamins such as B6 can be destroyed by micro-waving.

8) Antibiotics

Although valuable in fighting serious infection, some antibiotics also kill off friendly bacteria in the gut that would normally be producing B-group vitamins to be absorbed through the intestinal walls. This can result in deficiencies causing nervous disorders. When on a lengthy course of antibiotics try to supplement with at least B-group vitamins and pro-biotics to restore gut flora.

9) Food Allergies

The omission of whole food groups from the diet, for individuals allergic to such as gluten or lactose can result in the loss of major dietary sources of nutrients like calcium.

10) Food Storage

Freezing food containing Vitamin E reduces its levels once defrosted. Heat and air can turn Vitamin E rancid. Many common sources of Vitamin E such as bread and oils are highly processed to increase storage life these days reducing the Vitamin E content or even wiping it out completely. Vitamin E is a major antioxidant inhibiting oxidative damage to all tissues. Other vitamins lost from food preserving include vitamins B1 (Thiamine) and C.

11) Convenience Foods

A diet overly dependent on highly refined carbohydrates such as sugar, white flour and rice places greater demand on existing reserves of B-group vatamins to process the carbohydrates. An unbalanced diet can result in cnditions like irritability, lethargy and sleep disorders.

12) Crop Nutrient Losses

Some agricultural soils are deficient in trace elements. Decades of intensive farming an overwork and deplete soils unless these are regularly replaced. Australia for example has very low levels of the essential element selenium in its soil.

13) Illnesses and Accidents

Burns lead to loss of protein and other essential nutrients. Surgery increases the need for Zinc, Vitamin E and other nutrients involved in celular repair mechanisms Repair of broken bones is retarded by a lack of calcium and vitamin C. Infections increase the requirements of zinc, magnesium vitamins B5 and B6.

14) Pre-Menstrual Tension

Research has shown up to 60% of women suffering PMT symptoms like headaches, irritabilty, bloatedness, breast tenderness, lethergy and depression can benefit with B6 supplementation.

15) Lack of Sunlight

Shift workers, invalids, and people with minimal sunlight exposure can suffer Vitamin D deficiency which can lead to disruption of calcium metabolism. This can cause osteoporosis (bone thinning) and bone malformation.

16) Pregnant Women

Pregnancy creates higher than average demands for nutrients to ensure healthy growth of the baby and comfortable confinement for the mother. Nutrients typically in increassing demand are the whole B-group, A, D and E. The minerals include calcium, iron, magnesium, zinc and phosphorous. Professional nutritional advice should be sought during pregnancy.

17) Oral Contraceptives

Oral contraception can decrease absorption of folic acid and increase the need for vitamin B6, C, zinc and riboflavin.

18) Light Eaters

Some people eat very sparingly, even without weight reduction goals. US dietary surveys have shown the average woman maintains her weight on 7560 kilojoules per day. At this level low levels of vitamins B1, calcium and iron can be expected.

19) The Elderly

The aged have been shown to have a low intake of vitamins and minerals, particulary iron, calcium and zinc. Folic acid, vitamin C, B1 and B6 deficiencies are common. Fibre intake is often low. Possible causes include impaired sense of taste and smell, reduced seretion of digestive enzymes, chronic disease and physical impairment.

20) Teenagers

Rapid growth spurts in teenage years, particularly for girls, place high demands on nutrient resources to underwrite the accelerate physical, biochemical and emotional development in this age group.

21) **Athletes**

Athletes consume large amounts of food and experience considerable stress. These factors increase their needs for B-group vitamins, vitamin C and iron in particular. Tests on Australian Olympic athletes and A-grade football players for example, have shown wide-ranging vitamin deficiencies.

22) Low Body Reserves

Although the body is able to store reserves of certain vitamins such as A and E, Canadian autopsy data has shown that up to 30% of the population have low reserves of vitamin A, so low as to be judged ‘at risk’. Vitamin A is important to healthy skin and mucous membranes (including the sinus and lungs) and eyesight.

23) Stress

Chemical, physical and emotional stresses can increase the body’s needs for vitamins B2, B5, B6 and C. Air pollution increases the need for vitamin E.

24) Bio-Individuality

Wide fluctuations in individual nutrient requirements from the official Recommended Daily Intake (RDI) are common, particularly for those in high physical demand vocations such as manual labour and athletes.