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Essential Guide to Supplements That Help Prevent Disease

By Lynn Allison

Americans spend \$52 billion on nutritional supplements each year and 68 percent of us believe that they increase the quality and longevity of our lives. But experts say we should be cautious when selecting supplements and avoid claims that can't be scientifically supported.

"If it seems too good to be true, then it generally is," says Dr. Gary Small, a UCLA-based expert on cognitive function and brain health, and the author of "2 Weeks to a Younger Brain."

In an ideal world, we could get all of our nutrients from the foods we eat, but unfortunately because of soil depletion and overprocessing, many natural nutrients are destroyed. So many people take supplements as an insurance policy.

"The best way to get all your nutrients is from food," notes Dr. Ellen Kamhi, a medical school instructor and author of "The Natural Medicine Chest."

"But of course, there are many instances when your diet isn't sufficient to provide all the necessary nutrients."

And the need for supplementation increases dramatically as we age. "Throughout early adulthood, most of us live pain-free and generally disease-free lives," Dr. Michael A. Smith, author of "The Supplement Pyramid," tells *Health Radar*. "But as we get older, the pathological processes of aging can cause chronic inflammation, elevated cortisol levels, low insulin sensitivity, and hormone imbalances that manifest in pain and other illnesses."

Here are some recommendations for the best supplements that can help you stave off premature aging and disease.

Alzheimer's Disease

Small, the author of the *Mind Health Report* newsletter, has done extensive research into the use of supplements along with diet and exercise to preserve brain function.

Omega-3. Omega-3 supplements are at the forefront of good brain health. "People who consume omega-3 fatty acids have a lower risk of cognitive decline as they get older," says Small. A 2012 study showed that adults who took 2.2 grams of omega-3 supplement daily

for four months had significant improvements in cognitive abilities compared to adults who took a placebo.

Curcumin. This compound is the “golden boy” of supplements. Along with omega-3, most experts recommend taking curcumin capsules. Small participated in a research study that showed subjects who took a bioavailable form of curcumin in a supplement called Theracurmin (which contains 90 milligrams curcumin) twice daily showed behavioral and cognitive benefits along with a reduction in plaque and tangle formations in the brain associated with Alzheimer’s disease.

Folate. Dr. Jacob Teitelbaum, co-author of “Real Cause, Real Cure,” says a Baltimore Longitudinal Study of Aging that monitored more than 1,400 participants showed that people who got above the 400 micrograms or more of folate daily enjoyed a whopping 55 percent reduction in the risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease. Teitelbaum recommends taking a supplement because most of us can’t reach that level in food.

Arthritis

According to the Arthritis Foundation, more than 54 million Americans suffer from this debilitating disease. Natural supplements, along with exercise and weight loss, can help lessen symptoms by reducing inflammation and pain, and building bone strength.

Glucosamine. In her book, “An Alternative Medicine Definitive Guide to Arthritis,” Dr. Kamhi recommends this cartilage-building supplement. “Scientific research has shown that taking glucosamine re-establishes the level and reduces the pain of osteoarthritis,” she says. Dosage is 500 mg, three times daily.

Chondroitin sulfate. Another cartilage protector, this compound seems to protect joints from breaking down while accelerating the recovery of injured bones, especially when combined with glucosamine. Recommended dosage is 800-1,200 mg daily divided into two doses.

Vitamin D. This nutrient is essential to protect against illness and infection, says Smith.

The International Osteoporosis Foundation urges all older people to take vitamin D to prevent fractures. They recommend 1,000 IU daily for this age group.

Zinc. Zinc levels are often low in people suffering from arthritis. A deficiency can cause painful knee and hip joints. A therapeutic dose is 50 mg daily.

Cancer

The American Cancer Society estimates that there will be 1,735,350 new cases of cancer in 2018. According to Ajay Goel, Ph.D., a professor and researcher at the Baylor Scott & White Research Institute, current lifestyles lead to chronic inflammation, oxidation of cells, and chronic attacks on the gut biome.

“This may turn out to be the root cause of most of our diseases,” he tells *Health Radar*. “By using botanicals that naturally balance out the body’s immune system, we can help prevent diseases, including cancer.”

Curcumin. “My number one pick for cancer prevention, curcumin improves good



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bacteria while killing the bad,” Goel says. He recommends between 500 mg and 1,000 mg daily. “Always look for a high-quality, all-natural supplement and split the dosage twice or three times daily.”

Grape seed extract. The National Institutes of Health cited grapes and their products as “excellent sources of anticancer agents.” Goel recommends taking between 300 mg and 600 mg daily and buying the most natural product available.

Boswellia. Also known as frankincense, this ancient Indian herb was used for centuries to treat arthritis. But lately, researchers have focused on its ability to display antitumor activity in bladder, cervical, and other cancers. Look for boswellia products that say they contain AKBA on the label; those are the most powerful. Dosage ranges from 250-750 mg.

Vitamin D. Studies have shown that people who have high levels of vitamin D have significantly lower rates of breast, ovarian, renal, colon, pancreatic, prostate, and other cancers. Teitelbaum says that avoiding the sun for fear of getting skin cancer has driven vitamin D levels in our bodies dangerously low. “Avoid sunburn, not sunshine,” he says. Supplement dosage is 1,000 IU to 2,000 IU daily, which you can normally get in a good multivitamin.

Diabetes

Nearly 30 million Americans have diabetes. Of those, 31 percent use alternative medicines, including supplements, to manage their condition. In many cases, supplements can help Type 2

diabetes, the most common form in the United States.

“There have been countless studies on this topic,” says Dr. Jennifer Stagg, author of “Unzip Your Genes: 5 Choices to Reveal a Radically Radiant You,” and an expert on gene modification. Here are her suggestions:

Chromium. This essential trace mineral makes insulin more active by helping it bind to the insulin receptor, says Stagg. It is sold as chromium picolinate, chromium chloride, and chromium nicotinate. Recommended dosage is 200-1,000 mcg daily.

Biotin. This vitamin aids glucose management inside cells through the enzyme glucokinase. Research shows that the combination of chromium and biotin may improve blood sugar levels for people with Type 2 diabetes. Stagg recommends 3-16 mcg daily.

Vitamin D. The “sunshine vitamin” improves the secretion of insulin from the pancreas. It also improves glucose tolerance and insulin sensitivity, says Stagg, who recommends 800-2,000 IU daily.

Turmeric. A study by Biochemistry and Biophysical Research Communications found that curcumin, a component of the spice turmeric, is 400 times more powerful than the diabetes drug Metformin for improving insulin sensitivity and helping reverse diabetes. The recommended dose is 300-400 mg two or three times daily. Choose a supplement with 95 percent curcumin extract.

Heart Disease

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women in America. About 610,000 people die of heart disease in the U.S.

every year. Many experts believe that heart disease can be prevented and even reversed through better lifestyle. Dr. Stephen Sinatra, one of America’s foremost integrative cardiologists, says he has revitalized patients with even the most advanced forms of illness. Here are supplements that can help:

CoQ10 cocktail. Sinatra uses 50-100 mg of this enzyme along with 1-2 grams of omega-3s, 30-100 mg of resveratrol, 250-500 mg of curcumin, and 150-300 mcg of vitamin K as a base multivitamin supplement for his patients.

Curcumin. Dr. Sharad Paul, author of “The Genetics of Health,” says studies have shown that curcumin supplements reduce the risk of cardiac arrhythmias by reducing inflammation. Dosage is 1,000 mg daily.

Hawthorn. To lower blood pressure and reduce the risk of heart disease, Kamhi recommends this herb commonly taken in Europe. “It improves blood flow and strengthens the contractions of the heart muscle,” she explains. In a British trial, hawthorn showed significant benefits at a 1,200 mg daily dose.

Aged garlic extract. Dr. Matthew Budoff, a leading cardiologist and researcher, says that aged garlic extract capsules can reverse the buildup of deadly plaque in the arteries and help stop the progression of heart disease. Dosage is 2,400 mg daily.

Beetroot. Beetroot is a rich source of nitrates, which can lower blood pressure and improve energy and stamina. You can buy the supplement in capsule or powder form, or if you have a juicer, use fresh beets. Check labels for recommended dosage. □