



Supplements for Seniors Here are 4 You Should Take!

Hundreds of supplements are advertised with thousands of claims supporting their use...are you confused or concerned about what is important for good health as you age? Dietary supplements may enhance bone health, improve cardiovascular function, protect against eye disease, and more. Which ones should you take? There are many choices and the changing recommendations and sometimes confusing information make it difficult to know which ones are necessary and which ones may be dangerous or just a waste of money. Based on government guidelines and expert opinions, there are only four supplements which qualify as ones every older adult should seriously consider.

- 1. Multivitamins:** As people get older they may eat a less well-balanced diet, eat less food trying to control weight, or eat fewer meals. Getting all the necessary vitamins to meet nutritional needs is difficult when calorie intake is less. The aging process also causes decreased absorption of vitamins and minerals during digestion, making a daily multivitamin a good strategy for getting the basic amounts of these important nutrients.
- 2. Vitamin D:** Ninety percent of adults aged 51-70 are deficient in vitamin D! Vermonters and others living in the northern states receive inadequate ultraviolet light from the sun during the late fall and winter months and are unable to make any vitamin D during those months. In addition, the amount our bodies make decreases with age, so higher levels of vitamin D are recommended for older men and women. Without vitamin D, bones can become brittle and thin, potentially leading to osteoporosis. Older women are urged to take vitamin D and calcium supplements to protect bone health.
- 3. Calcium:** Many experts recommend 1200 mg of calcium with a vitamin D supplement for optimal bone health for both men and women. Splitting the calcium into two 600 mg doses may enable better absorption. Calcium also plays important roles in helping muscles function properly and in normalizing blood pressure.
- 4. Fish Oil:** Fish oil contains omega-3 fatty acids which are essential for promoting optimum levels of blood fats to help prevent heart disease. The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommends eating a 3-oz serving of fish twice a week. People who don't eat much fish or who don't meet this recommendation would benefit from a fish oil supplement with 300 mg of omega-3, three times/day or 1000-1200 mg/ day.

Most importantly, do not try to substitute supplements for a healthy diet. Fresh, colorful fruits and vegetables provide nutritional advantages that cannot be duplicated by pills and capsules. Supplements are meant to be supplements! By adding important nutrients not provided by foods in adequate amounts, supplements can improve our health as we age. Ask your doctor what supplements and what amounts will be best for you.

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