



BACKGROUND

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Multivitamins

THE BASICS

- The multivitamin is a supplement to—not a substitute for—a well-balanced diet. Combined with other healthy lifestyle choices such as an appropriate exercise regimen, getting enough sleep and regular visits to the doctor, the multivitamin is a smart choice that plays an important role in promoting good health.
- Multivitamins are a safe, affordable and reliable means of filling nutrition gaps and ensuring adequate intake of a variety of nutrients—a nutritional insurance policy for less than a dime a day.
- Nutrition surveys consistently show that substantial numbers of Americans fail to obtain recommended amounts of various nutrients from diet alone. Multivitamins are a proven bridge between what we should eat and what we actually eat.
- According to the 2005 USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans, intakes of vitamins A, C and E, along with calcium and magnesium are especially low in the diets of American adults and children.
- Official recommendations from the USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans and from the Food and Nutrition Board specifically advise women of childbearing age to get a supplemental source of folic acid and people over 50 to get a supplemental source of B-12. A multivitamin will fill both of these needs.
- Scientific evidence strongly suggests that individuals who regularly use multivitamins and other specific vitamin and mineral supplements have a lower risk of some chronic diseases.
- Generous intakes of antioxidant vitamins have been associated with reduced risk of some chronic diseases, in the same way that generous intakes of fruits and vegetables have been associated with similar health benefits.
- The use of multivitamins and other nutritional supplements has been shown to improve immune function and may reduce infectious disease among older Americans.
- Dietary supplements have been widely used and highly valued by American consumers since vitamins first became commercially available in the U.S., beginning in the early years of the 20th century.

BY THE NUMBERS

- In the most recent survey by NHANES, the multivitamin is by far the most commonly used dietary supplement—used by 35% of the American adult population in 2000, the most recent figure available. The next most popular supplements are vitamin C, vitamin E, and calcium.

CRN BACKGROUNDER

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- The March of Dimes and the Centers for Disease Control have encouraged women of child-bearing age to take a multivitamin with folic acid daily as part of a healthy diet and a healthy lifestyle practice to reduce the risk of neural tube birth defects.
- The 2000-2001 NHANES report on dietary intake showed that Americans failed to get even the average requirement for certain vitamins, much less the recommended dietary allowance. For example, 90% of Americans don't achieve the average requirement for vitamin E, and over 30% don't get the average requirement for vitamin C.
- Supplement use by Americans has grown steadily in every decade. The most recent NHANES data on dietary supplement reports use by over half the adult population. Other surveys have shown higher usage for supplements for the general adult population, with a CRN survey finding 62% of the population use supplements.
- According to a series of NHANES surveys, among older age groups, the prevalence of dietary supplement use increased from 30% in the early 1970s to 44% by 1980, 55% by 1994, and 63% by 2000. Supplement use is higher among older age groups than younger age groups.
- The use of dietary supplements is positively related to level of education, and health professionals are just as likely as the general public to use vitamin supplements.
- Daily vitamin users work out a significantly greater number of days per week than do weekly vitamin users or nonusers. (Styles 2005*)
- Daily vitamin users are more likely than weekly users or nonusers to have a good relationship with their doctors and say they work with their doctors to manage their health. (Styles 2005)
- Daily and weekly vitamin users are more likely than nonusers to say that having healthy eating habits is very important to them. (Styles 2005)
- According to the 2000 figures from NHANES, the vast majority of supplement users take only one to three products on a regular basis, while only 17% of supplement users take four or more.
- According to *Nutrition Business Journal*, the multivitamin is the top selling dietary supplement. In 2005, U.S. consumer sales of multivitamins totaled \$4.2 billion, representing 58% of all domestic vitamin sales.

**The ConsumerStyles survey is a comprehensive look at what the American public is currently buying, where they are shopping, what they are eating, what their attitudes toward products and services are, and how to reach them. This mail survey is sent to 20,000 consumers, and includes over-samples of low-income, minority and households with children. ConsumerStyles enjoys an average response rate of 60% (approximately 12,000 completed surveys), and the sample is stratified (or balanced) on region, household income, population density, age and household size in order to create a nationally representative sample.*