

## **“Nutritional supplementations and seniors: The need to provide”**

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The growing trend is “gray”; more people are living longer and one of the issues that need to be addressed is nutrition. As we age, we tend to consume fewer calories which can lead to vitamin and mineral deficiencies. The aging population consumes less calories and varied foods because of access, teeth problems, depression, change in taste and smell, finances, medication consumption and convenience. This risk in malnutrition can lead to several health problems. Low blood levels of certain nutrients are associated with impaired cognitive function in elderly people. These cognitive problems influence behavior, social activities and independence. This is why the selection of colorful “whole” foods is important.

Fruits and vegetables contain micronutrients; vitamin C, vitamin E and selenium which have antioxidant potential. The body can't synthesize them, so they must be consumed. Antioxidants can prevent oxidative damage to cells. This can help to prevent cardiovascular disease, so the need to supplement is important.

The ideal way to obtain nutrients is to eat a balanced diet, but when that isn't being achieved, [supplementation](#) is recommended. Multivitamin use has been associated with a lower risk of heart disease, colon cancer, breast cancer and length of infection in older adults. Studies estimate that a more widespread use of multivitamins among adults over 65 years of age may significantly reduce Healthcare costs through reductions in heart disease and improved immune function.

Low levels of B vitamins have been found in seniors with low income brackets. B vitamins are water soluble and are essential for the release of energy. These vitamins have been linked to the possible prevention for the onset of dementia. They can be obtained through milk, fruit, meat, vegetables, whole grains and cereal. These essential nutrients can assist with normal vision, the maintenance of nerve and muscle tissue, a normal functioning nervous system and the formation of normal red blood cells. Deficiencies in B vitamins may result in fatigue, weakness, nerve disorders, mental confusion, skin disorders, depression, anemia, kidney stones and sleep disorders.

Additionally, low vitamin D consumption has been found in North American Seniors due to diet and limited sun exposure. Vitamin D is a fat soluble vitamin that is needed for the absorption of calcium which is utilized in bone formation. Food sources containing vitamin D are orange juice, cow or soy milk and oily fish like salmon or tuna. Deficiencies can lead to weak bones, loss of body strength, osteoarthritis, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, various types of cancer and compromised immune function.

Other important nutrients include Calcium, magnesium and Chromium. Calcium is a mineral which are components of bones and teeth. Food sources that contain calcium are dairy products and leafy green vegetables; the problem is that many older people don't eat enough from dietary sources. The need to supplement is important because deficiencies can lead to osteoporosis, irregular blood pressure and possibly cancer. Magnesium can be found in unrefined grains and

vegetables and is extremely important to the central nervous system. Deficiencies can result in hypertension, diabetes, stroke or severe personality changes. While Chromium can be found in dietary sources such as whole grain products recommended daily amounts are usually not consumed in older people. Deficiencies may include weight loss or elevated glucose.

Insufficient intake of specific amino acids can lead to functional deficiencies, but high plasma levels of some amino acids may have detrimental effects. To furnish an optimal amino acid mixture remains a challenge also because the requirements for amino acid intake are determined by many factors including age, liver function, renal function, and catabolism caused by disease or trauma. This is why [metabolic panel testing](#) can be beneficial; because it takes a look at the inside of the body to determine exactly what nutrients are deficient and how much a person needs to supplement at safe levels. Two essential amino acids; Methionine and Taurine specifically need to be addressed. Methionine is a sulfur-containing amino acid that is essential for normal metabolism and can help to neutralize toxins and assist in preventing depression. Taurine is a major player in brain chemistry and may be beneficial for Alzheimer's disease. This essential amino acid can function as an antioxidant and assist in improving symptoms of depression and anxiety.

So, the saying is true, "You are what you eat". Nutrition is the affect that food has on our body and nutrients function at a cellular level. Good nutrition promotes a healthy quality of life. To obtain maximum health our body requires metabolic harmony. The way for seniors to obtain this is by averting malnutrition and preventing dietary deficiency diseases. Poor nutrition and lack of physical activity can lead to morbidity and mortality. My best advice to seniors when it comes to supplementation is "test, don't guess". Conduct a nutritional and metabolic assessment test to determine exactly what doses of supplementations your body is deficient in. Knowledge is power and the first step is deciding to ["Take control of your health"](#).