

The Three Supplements You and Your Patients Should Take Every Day

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From a lifestyle standpoint, the body of evidence strongly suggests that maintenance of optimal health throughout our lifetime requires that we consume a diet low in animal fat and high in protective nutrients and dietary fiber derived from fruits, vegetables, legumes and whole grains. We should remain at or near our ideal body weight; maintain a good status of aerobic (cardiovascular) fitness; and take a daily high-potency multivitamin/mineral enriched with antioxidants, adequate B vitamins and at least 400-500 mg of elemental calcium.

High-Potency Multivitamin/Mineral and Other Lifelong Supplements

It is well-established that free radicals - generated from the metabolism of oxygen within our cells, cigarette smoking, exposure to ultraviolet light (sun and tanning beds), radiation exposure, alcohol, nitrosamines, and other environmental sources - accelerate the aging process and contribute to the development of many degenerative diseases. Studies show that individuals with superior antioxidant status have a reduced risk of cancer, cardiovascular disease, Alzheimer's disease, cataracts, macular degeneration and other degenerative diseases. Antioxidant supplementation at levels beyond those provided by food alone is important to help prevent degenerative diseases and slow the aging process.

The same is true for B vitamins. Numerous studies demonstrate that individuals who routinely ingest supplements containing B vitamins have a lower risk of heart disease, certain cancers, and age-related cognitive decline. Certain B vitamins (folic acid, vitamin B₁₂ and vitamin B₆) prevent the buildup of homocysteine. High blood levels of homocysteine are linked to cardiovascular disease and vascular events that impair blood circulation to the brain. Many B vitamins also participate as coenzymes in the synthesis of brain neurotransmitters. Studies show that insufficient B vitamin intake can lead to reduced neurotransmitter synthesis, resulting in impaired cognitive function.

Folic acid and vitamin B₁₂ are also required for DNA synthesis during normal cellular replication. Low blood levels and/or intake levels of folic acid (a common finding in North America) result in hypomethylation of DNA, making chromosomes more susceptible to strand breakages and mutations. As such, suboptimal nutritional status of folic acid is linked to an increased risk of some cancers (colon, cervical, esophageal, etc.). It is well-established that the incidence of spinal birth defects (e.g., spina bifida) would be reduced by approximately 50 percent if all women took a supplement containing 400 mcg of folic acid during their childbearing years. This, of course, also ties back to the role of folic acid as a necessary requirement for DNA synthesis within the fetus.

Studies also show that most North American men and women do not consume the amount of calcium required to optimize and maintain bone mineral density up to age 50, or effectively reduce the rate of bone loss after the age of 50. Insufficient calcium intake over one's lifetime is a major contributing factor for osteoporosis, which affects one in four women and one in eight men by age 50 in North America. Studies show that most individuals are lacking at least 500 mg per day of elemental calcium necessary to meet the daily recommendations outlined by the National Institutes

of Health. Thus, a high-potency multivitamin/mineral supplement that provides antioxidant enrichment (vitamin C: 1,000 mg; vitamin E: 400 IU; selenium: 100 mcg; etc.), a B-50 complex, and 500 mg of elemental calcium, is an important component of a lifestyle program to help prevent degenerative diseases and slow the aging process.

I also endorse the use of an essential fatty acid supplement (a 1,200 mg capsule containing 400 mg each of borage seed oil, flaxseed oil and fish oil) to optimize synthesis of the prostaglandin hormones that reduce cancer and heart disease risk and suppress inflammation, as well as the daily ingestion of 2 tablespoons of flaxseed powder (ground flaxseed). Flaxseed powder contains mammalian lignan precursors that give rise to enterolactone and enterodiols upon metabolism by gut bacteria. Enterolactone and enterodiols are absorbed into the bloodstream and exert profound effects on various tissues, which are associated with reduced risk of reproductive organ cancers, reduced risk of gallbladder disease, lowering of blood cholesterol and improved health and function of the large bowel.

Thus, in addition to consuming a healthy diet and participating in regular exercise, I strongly advise supplementing with a high-potency multivitamin and mineral supplement, an essential fatty acid supplement, and 2 tablespoons of flaxseed powder on a daily basis.

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