

# Should You Take Your Multivitamin?

Posted by Steve Van Zandt on Dec 18, 2011



Multivitamins have been a staple of a healthy lifestyle for as long as most can remember. For decades, nutritionists, dieticians, and doctors alike have encouraged taking a multivitamin to compensate for dietary shortfalls. Now, several recent studies have resulted in a reversal in thinking among many in the health industry.

In one study, published last year, scientists at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center followed 160,000 postmenopausal women for about 10 years. The research concluded multivitamins failed to prevent cancer, heart disease, and all causes of death for all women regardless of how healthy their diet was. A British review of eight studies found no evidence that multivitamins reduced infection in older adults. Another study found that the vitamins didn't improve fatigue among breast cancer patients undergoing radiation therapy. Also, it was found that inner-city schoolchildren who took a multi did not perform any better on tests or have fewer sick days than students who didn't take one. Lastly, a study following nearly 38,000 women for 15 years with an average age of 62, when the study began, found that 85 percent of the ones taking vitamins lived shorter lives.

The problem is most people read these headlines and run with it as fact without knowing or understanding the details of the studies. It is absurd to think taking a multivitamin will counter the effects that harmful radiation would have on energy levels. It is equally crazy to think that school kids eating pop tarts for breakfast and fruit rollups for lunch will magically become smarter or healthier just taking multivitamins. These studies are about as informative as a study suggesting Band-Aids to little to stop the effects of a gunshot wound.

You can find countless articles on the web by dieticians and nutritionists promoting the idea that the body can get everything it needs from food. And they are right. Well sort of. You can do it-but it's not that easy. The fact of the matter is that there are over twenty vitamins and minerals that are required for proper bodily function, and you can't get significant amounts of all of them from any single food source. You need to not only eat a variety of foods, but a very specific variety of foods on a daily basis in order to have at least a chance. This is a challenge even for the most hardcore fitness enthusiast.

Furthermore, it is extremely important to understand that nothing can replace real food as your primary source of nutrients and no supplements in the world can counter the effects of a [poor diet](#). In fact, a diet full of processed foods and chemicals will lead to [gut inflammation](#) which will make it difficult to absorb nutrients. Basically, you can pump multis all day, but if your digestive system is not healthy you're wasting your time and money. Guarantee this wasn't taken into account in any study.

I'm always advocating eating foods closest to their natural source much like our early ancestors who had to hunt and farm to eat. Many would argue that our ancestors also never took multivitamins and did just fine and they would be right. However, I would counter argue that our ancestors also did not eat food grown in nutrient-depleted soils with chemicals that further deplete the body's nutritional resources. Our ancestors did not spend two or more hours breathing in gasoline fumes from the freeway every day. Our ancestors did not live a high-stress life permanently on orange alert. Our ancestors were not chronically sleep-deprived. Our ancestors did not consider beer pong a sport. Our ancestors also did not suffer from rampant heart disease, stroke, and diabetes.

So if I convinced you to hold off on tossing your multivitamin in the trash the next question is can you just buy the \$5 360 tablet multivitamin found at Walmart? Despite what you may have heard, all multivitamins are not created equal. Expecting a one a day Centrum to fulfill your dietary needs is like expecting a Chevy to run like a Lexus. If you are going to buy a multivitamin, do yourself a huge favor and get a good one. The reason that some multivitamins cost more than others are too numerous to get into here, but suffice it to say that it has mostly to do with better ingredients and superior quality control.

For those you feel like you just can't choke down any more pills regardless of how good they are for you, I highly recommend [Paleo Cleanse by Designs for Health](#). It is a powder form that not only has a built in multivitamin, but also provides liver/gallbladder support, antioxidants, anti estrogen, and rice and pea protein.

### **The Bottom Line:**

Providing the body with all of the essential vitamins and minerals using food alone is possible, but requires a high level of education and commitment which is more effort than most people are willing to put forth. If you are going to take a multivitamin, it is preferable to get one that uses naturally sourced nutrients and is manufactured according to the highest standards of quality available. For now, I will continue to take mine.