

# PUTTING AN END TO SUPPLEMENT CONFUSION

## BY MARY JO KURTZ

One of the most frequently asked questions by my clients is whether they should be taking vitamin and/or mineral supplements. Unfortunately the answer varies by individual. So, I thought I would share some of my guidelines that I encourage my clients to follow.

### ✓ **FOOD FIRST**

Vitamins and minerals, also called micronutrients are necessary for our bodies to function properly. They cannot be produced by the body. Therefore, the only way for us to get the vitamins and minerals we need is from our food or some type of supplement.

Unfortunately, some people believe that if they skip meals or their diet is not well balanced they can just take a pill instead. Unfortunately it's not that simple. So, my first rule is to strive to get all the necessary vitamins and minerals from the foods in a healthy diet.

### ✓ **USE WHOLE FOOD SUPPLEMENTS**

Whether your diet is less than ideal, (yes, it can happen to anyone) or quite "balanced," studies have shown that today's fruits and vegetables contain fewer nutrients than they did decades ago. In addition, many other factors such as age, sex, stress level, physiological needs, lifestyle, illness and medications all can impact a person's nutritional needs. For these reasons, many of us benefit by nutritional supplements.

Choosing which supplement is typically the most difficult decision. I recommend that you choose a whole food form not an isolated vitamin or mineral. Don't be enticed by bulk containers of vitamin C, E or B that you typically see at wholesale clubs and grocery stores. In general, these are synthetic forms of isolated vitamins. The best supplements are those that are made from fresh organic whole foods that have been dried, minimally processed and are converted to powder, tablets, and/or capsules. They don't contain synthetic nutrients. They're as close to their natural state with a full spectrum of supporting nutrients. This is the way the body absorbs and utilizes nutrients best. It's as if you are getting your nutrients from food.

### ✓ **DETERMINE WHICH VITAMINS/MINERALS YOUR BODY NEEDS**

Of course the toughest question remains: Which vitamins or minerals should I use? Again, the answer varies from person to person. Each of us is completely different in our biological make-up. For this reason – there is no one set of nutritional requirements that we can all follow to maintain health. Without knowing what it is that your body needs, supplements can actually lead to deficiencies of other nutrients and eventually to a health crisis.

For these reasons, I recommend testing services now available that can determine vitamin and mineral levels in the body as well as the presence of toxic heavy metals. With these services other factors such as nutrient ratios can be measured. These ratios are just as important for optimal health as are individual levels. For example, the ratio of calcium to magnesium is critical for proper metabolic functions. Even with acceptable calcium levels, without adequate magnesium health conditions can occur. Also, antagonistic relationships

between minerals can become a concern. This happens when the over utilization of a vitamin or mineral reduces the absorption of another. For instance, calcium and iron have this relationship and should be monitored accordingly.

I recommend utilizing laboratory hair analysis as a great first step in determining your nutritional needs. This test can measure the mineral content of the hair and give a good picture of your body's internal environment. Based on your results, both a good nutritional program and a specific supplement program can be developed to meet your specific needs. See the new Hair Analysis Package available through Wellnecessity.