

Pure and simple

Why whole foods should come before supplements.

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With so many supplements on the market these days, you could be forgiven for thinking that we can all stay healthy just by taking a cocktail of capsules and not worry so much about eating whole foods. But this isn't the case. Supplements have that name for a reason; they are intended to 'supplement' our diets at those times when our bodies need that extra boost or support.

If you're ill, have a health condition or exercise hard and need a little help to bring your body back into balance, then a supplement may be just the ticket. Supplements are a great way to support and complement good eating habits, but they are not there to replace whole foods. If you are eating a poor diet and taking a multivitamin, hoping it will keep you healthy, then think again! There are many benefits that come only from eating real, whole foods.

What are whole foods? Well, they are exactly that: foods that are whole. They are the colourful vegetables and fruits that line the shelves of the produce section of your local grocery store, or farmers' market. They are the foods that

don't have an ingredient list and certainly not one as long as your arm.

However, they are not just vegetables and fruits. They include nuts, seeds, legumes, beans, even humanely raised meat like, poultry, pork and fish—minus added hormones and antibiotics. Put simply, whole foods are the *real foods* provided to us by nature, without all the additives, preservatives and fillers that are present in so many processed, packaged foods. Here are a few benefits to be gained from eating whole foods:

Fibre

When you eat whole foods, you access all the wonderful nutrients contained within that food, including fibre. If you are relying on supplements, you won't get the natural fibre found in food. Fibre is crucial for our bodies to stay healthy. It helps keep things moving through our digestive system, making our bowel movements regular. It also helps stabilize blood sugar and it reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease and weight gain.

Variety and a balanced diet

Enjoying a varied, whole food diet will give you that ideal balance of the nutrition your body needs to operate optimally. When you eat a diet rich in a variety of whole foods, you are nourishing your body with all the necessary nutrients including protein, carbohydrates, fats, fibre, vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients. Take an apple for example. Just a single apple is full of fibre, vitamin C, B vitamins, potassium, calcium and magnesium. Every fruit, vegetable, nut, bean and succulent piece of poultry has its own plentiful nutritional profile, nourishing your body with a number of nutrients.

Working together

It's true—vitamins and minerals team up in our bodies to make sure we can be at our best. If you are taking a single vitamin or mineral supplement, you may need another one, two or three to help that vitamin or mineral be properly absorbed or utilized by the body. Take the

mineral calcium for example; calcium works with magnesium for many of the functions it performs in the body, especially for the muscles. Vitamin D is also important for calcium absorption. This is just one example of how the body doesn't rely on one single nutrient at a time—it needs variety. Eating a whole food, balanced diet will ensure you get the best mix of nutrients working together to help you feel great.

When to use supplements

While eating a whole food diet is the best way to supply our bodies with the needed nutrients, we sometimes may need a little boost to get things back into balance. This is where supplements shine! Some examples of when you may need supplemental support include:

- » Sickness (cold, flu or nausea)
- » Health conditions (arthritis, IBS, diabetes or anxiety)
- » Age (as we age, the body's ability to perform certain functions or utilize certain nutrients may diminish)
- » After taking medications (our bodies may become depleted of certain nutrients after taking medications)
- » Lifestyle factors (special diets or exercise)
- » Nutrient deficiencies

When picking out supplements, always be sure you are getting a good quality product, as cheaper brands can contain fillers and additives, or be derived from unhealthy sources. It's best you reach out to your local health food store to make sure you're getting the best quality supplement to suit your needs. [Z](#)

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