

Are Multivitamins Worth the Money?

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Sarah Pritts, MD

(PhysOrg.com) -- Nowadays, there seems to be a pill for everything, and multivitamins are getting a reputation of being a quick fix for nutrition and overall healthy living. But University of Cincinnati Physicians say that for the healthy patient, multivitamins aren't living up to their promise.

"Nearly half of Americans take multivitamins, and one-a-days could be seen as an insurance policy on nutrition, but it's not been proven whether or not they are necessary," says Sarah Pritts, MD.

Pritts who sees patients at UC's Wyoming Family Care practice, says a well-balanced diet should provide all of the nutrients needed.

"Patients should get most of their vitamins and minerals via a [balanced diet](#) consisting of fruits, vegetables, [whole grains](#) and [dairy products](#)," she says. "Supplements do not take the place of food—or activity, for that matter, which is also important to maintaining a healthy lifestyle."

She says although there is no proof supporting the benefit of multivitamins, there is no harm in using them either.

"They don't appear to hurt those who consume them, except when it comes to a person's wallet," she says. "However, they may prove beneficial for those who skimp on the fruits and veggies."

Kathleen Downey, MD, also a University of Cincinnati Physician at Wyoming, adds that there are other groups, besides those who don't strictly follow the food pyramid, who may benefit from the use of multivitamins.

"Children need [vitamin D](#) along with other vitamins and minerals for healthy, growing bodies," she says. "Children tend to be picky eaters, so it might not hurt to give the youngsters a multivitamin."

She adds that healthy women should consider taking a vitamin D supplement and that postmenopausal should consider taking calcium supplements to ensure healthy bones.

Downey also says [pregnant women](#) should take a [multivitamin](#) to ensure that mother-to-be and baby are getting the nutrients needed for a healthy pregnancy.

"While [healthy eating](#) may be of the best way to achieve good nutrition, some [nutrients](#) may be hard to get from food, at least in sufficient amounts," she continues, adding that omega-3 fats are a heart healthy nutrient that are difficult to get through diet alone but easy to supplement by taking fish or flax seed oil, especially for those with an elevated risk of heart disease.

"Vitamin B supplements are also a good option for vegetarians and vegans since these groups avoid eating fish and meat," she says.

But regardless of whether or not you make multivitamins part of your daily health regimen, both Pritts and Downey say that trying to eat as nutritiously as possible and exercising regularly should be a priority.

"That's a simple, straightforward way to make sure you are doing what you can to keep your body going strong," Pritts says.

Provided by University of Cincinnati

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