Why you may need nutritional supplements

Many people believe that eating a well-balanced diet provides all the vitamins and minerals necessary for good health. In ideal circumstances, this is the case; however in reality there are many reasons why you may need nutritional supplements to cope with living in the 21st Century. Taking suitable nutritional supplements when required is a safe method of optimising your dietary sources. Always consult your health care professional as self-prescribing contains hidden dangers.

1. Poor digestion

Even when your food intake is good, inefficient digestion can limit your body's uptake of vitamins. Some common causes of inefficient digestion are not chewing well enough (including dentures) and eating too fast. Low stomach acid also hinders proper breakdown of foods preventing absorption. Low acidity is caused by stress and use of antacids.

2. Hot coffee, tea, spices

Habitual drinking of liquids that are too hot or consuming an excess of irritants such as coffee, tea or pickles and spices can cause inflammation of the digestive linings resulting in a drop in secretion of digestive fluids and poor extraction of vitamins and minerals from food.

3. Alcohol

Drinking too much alcohol is known to damage the liver and pancreas, both of which are vital to digestion and metabolism. It can also damage the lining of the intestinal tract and adversely affect the absorption of nutrients, leading to sub-clinical malnutrition. Regular heavy use of alcohol increases the body's need for the B-group vitamins, particularly thiamine, niacin, pyridoxine, folic acid and Vitamins B12, A & C, and minerals zinc, magnesium and calcium. Alcohol affects availability, absorption and metabolism of nutrients.

4. Smoking

Smoking tobacco is an irritant to the digestive tract and increases the body's need for Vitamin C (25mg/cigarette). Vitamin C is important for good immune function.

5. Laxatives

Overuse of laxatives can result in poor absorption of vitamins and minerals from food by hastening the intestinal transit time. Paraffin and other mineral oils increase losses of the fat soluble vitamins A, D, E & K. Laxative overuse also leads to large losses of minerals potassium, sodium and magnesium.

6. Fad diets

Bizarre diets that miss out on whole groups of foods can be seriously lacking in vitamins. Even the popular low fat diets can lead to deficiencies of Vitamins A, D and E as well as

impairing calcium absorption. Vegetarian diets which completely exclude meat and other animal products must be skilfully planned to avoid vitamin B12 deficiency.

7. Overcooking

Lengthy cooking or reheating of foods can oxidise and destroy heat susceptible vitamins such as the B-group, C & E. Boiling vegetables leaches the water soluble vitamins B-group and C and many minerals. Light steaming is preferable. Some vitamins such as vitamin B6 can be destroyed by irradiation from microwaves.

8. Food storage

Freezing food containing vitamin E can significantly reduce its levels once defrosted. Foods containing vitamin E exposed to heat and air can turn rancid. Many common sources of vitamin E, such as bread and oils are processed reducing the vitamin E content significantly. Vitamin E is an antioxidant which protects the body's cells from oxidative damage. Other vitamins lost from preserving foods include B1 and C.

9. Convenience foods

A diet overly dependent on highly refined carbohydrates (sugar, white flour, white rice) place greater demands on vitamins required to metabolise carbohydrates (B-group vitamins). An unbalanced diet contributes to such conditions as irritability, lethargy, sleep disorders, emotional disorders, diabetes & elevated cholesterol levels.

10. Antibiotics

Some antibiotics kill off friendly bacteria in the gut. This inhibits vitamin absorption and may lead to gut dysbiosis (leaky gut). It is advisable to supplement with both Lactobacillus and Bifidus bacteria while taking antibiotics and for at least two weeks after completion of the last course.

11. Food allergies

The omission of whole food groups from the diet, as in the case of allergies to gluten or lactose, can mean the loss of significant dietary sources of nutrients such as thiamine, riboflavin or calcium.

12. Crop nutrient losses

Some agricultural soils are deficient in trace elements. Decades of intensive agriculture can overwork and deplete soils of nutrients and trace elements.

13. Accidents and illness

Burns lead to a loss of protein and essential trace nutrients such as vitamins and minerals. Surgery increases the need for zinc, vitamin E and other nutrients involved in the cellular repair mechanism. The repair of broken bones will be retarded by an inadequate supply of calcium and vitamin C. The challenge of infection places high demand on the nutritional resources of zinc, magnesium and vitamins B5 and B6.

14. Stress

Chemical, physical and emotional stresses can increase the body's requirements for vitamins B2, B5, B6 and C. Air pollution increases the requirements for vitamin E.

15. PMT

Research has demonstrated that up to 60% of women suffering from symptoms of premenstrual tension, such as headaches, irritability, bloatedness, breast tenderness, lethargy and depression can benefit from supplementation with vitamin B6.

16. Teenagers

Rapid growth spurts such as in the teenage years, particularly in girls, place high demands on nutritional resources to support accelerated physical, biochemical and emotional development. Bone density is also mostly laid down during teenage years underlining the importance of adequate amounts of calcium, magnesium, phosphorous, boron and vitamin C.

17. Pregnant women

Pregnancy creates high than average demands for nutrients to ensure healthy growth of the baby and comfortable confinement for the mother. Nutrients which typically require increase during pregnancy are protein, B-group vitamins including folic acid and B12, A, D, E and the minerals calcium, iron, magnesium, zinc and phosphorous.

18. Oral contraceptives

Oral contraceptives can decrease absorption of folic acid and increase the need for Vitamins B2, B6 and C, zinc; increasing levels of Vitamins A & K (which contribute to blood clotting)

19. Light eaters

Some people eat very sparingly, even without weight reduction goals.

20. Athletes

Athletes consume large amounts of food and experience considerable stress. These factors affect their needs of B-group vitamins, vitamin C and iron. Tests on Australian Olympic athletes and A-grade football players have shown wide ranging vitamin deficiencies.

21. Lack of sunlight

Invalids, shift-workers and people whose exposure to sunlight may be minimal can suffer from insufficient amounts of vitamin D which is required for calcium metabolism. Ultraviolet light is the stimulus to vitamin D formation in the skin. It is blocked by cloud, fog, smog, window glass, curtains, clothing and SPF.

22. Bio-availability

Wide fluctuations in individual nutrient requirements from the official recommended average vitamin and mineral intakes are common, particularly for those in high physical demand vocations such as athletes and manual labour, taking into account body weight and physical type. Protein intake influences the need for vitamin B6 and vitamin B1 is linked to kilojoule intake.

23. Low body reserves

Although the body is able to store reserves of certain vitamins such as A and E, autopsies have shown that up to 30% of the population have extremely low reserves. Vitamin A is important to healthy skin and mucous membranes (including the sinus and lungs) and eyesight.

24. The elderly

The aged have been shown to have a low intake of vitamins and minerals, particularly iron, zinc and calcium. Folic acid deficiency is often found in conjunction with low Vitamin C levels. Fibre intake is often low. Riboflavine and pyridoxine deficiencies have also been observed. Possible causes include impaired sense of taste and smell, reduced secretion of digestive enzymes, chronic illness, dentures, physical impairment.

Dagmar is able to assist with nutritional needs and provides only quality, top grade practitioner-only products.