

## ABOUT MULTIPLE VITAMINS AND MINERAL SUPPLEMENTS by Paul Ratté, N.D.

### Why take a multiple vitamin/mineral supplement?

It is almost impossible to get adequate levels of vitamins and minerals from the diet alone. The standard American diet is high in empty calories that are practically devoid of vitamins and minerals; low in fiber; high in saturated fat; high in refined carbohydrates and sugar; and low in the number one source of vitamins and minerals - colorful vegetables. As it is easier to take a pill than to change the diet, a high-quality multiple vitamin/mineral supplement is the easiest insurance policy to follow.

### What's in a multiple vitamin/mineral supplement?

There are four classes of nutrients addressed by most multiple vitamin/mineral supplements:

1. **B vitamins** are essential for proper energy production. These include thiamin (vitamin B1), riboflavin (B2), niacin (B3), pantothenic acid (B5), vitamin B6, vitamin B12, and folic acid. These vitamins have a demonstrated effect to reduce cholesterol, prevent heart disease, elevate mood, regulate the stress response, increase energy, and improve blood sugar regulation.
2. **Antioxidants** provide cellular protection against the damaging effects of free radicals that are produced as a by-product of normal metabolism. These antioxidants include vitamin A, vitamin E, vitamin C, vitamin B2, zinc, selenium, copper, manganese, and beta-carotene (precursor to vitamin A). This is probably the most important class of nutrients as they are protective against heart disease and cancer.
3. **Macrominerals** are essential for structural health. These include calcium, magnesium, potassium, and sodium. These are known as electrolytes and are found in high concentrations in the body and are very important for proper muscle and heart function and bone structure. These minerals take up a lot of space in a multivitamin and require more pills per day to get the required amounts. Multivitamin/minerals that are advertised at one to two pills per day do not have required amounts of these macro-minerals.
4. **Trace minerals** are found in small amounts in the body and are important in a number of physiological functions. Chromium and vanadium help to regulate blood sugar and can help to reduce the risk of diabetes. Iodine is essential for proper thyroid function. Boron and manganese are important for bone structure. Molybdenum is important for proper liver detoxification.

### Can I just take one pill a day?

Different multivitamins have differing amounts of ingredients based upon the design of the formula. For example, some formulas are designed to provide higher doses of the B vitamins. But, something has to be subtracted in order for this to happen. Often calcium and magnesium are at very low doses in one-a-day multivitamins because they take up a lot of space. It is impossible to attain optimal levels of all four categories of nutrients by taking one to two pills each day. Making the choice to take a one-a-day multivitamin means you are cutting corners somewhere.

### Is there a difference in the quality of ingredients?

The price of a multivitamin is dependent upon the quality of ingredients used in the formula. It is important to consider that not all vitamins are created equal, as it is dependent upon the form of the vitamin or the carrier molecule of the mineral. For example, vitamin E can exist in a natural form (d-alpha tocopherol) or a synthetic form (dl-alpha tocopherol). Calcium carbonate is found in inexpensive supplements and is much more difficult to absorb compared to highly absorbable calcium citrate or calcium aspartate.

At the Natural Care Center we offer a wide range of multivitamins. They differ on quality of ingredients and potency. Higher quality vitamins and minerals increase the cost of the supplement. A “good” multivitamin can become an “average” multivitamin if you don’t take it at the recommended dose. It is important to read labels when comparing formulas as the serving size can vary. The “best” multivitamin will be a citrate or aspartate formula that needs to be dosed at four to six pills each day to provide comprehensive nutritional support.

If you are interested in making an appointment with Paul Ratté, N.D., to assess how naturopathic approaches can improve your health and wellness, call the Natural Care Center at Woodwinds at (651) 232-6830. If you would like to read additional articles about natural approaches to health, visit Northwestern Health Sciences University’s website at [www.nwhealth.edu/woodwinds](http://www.nwhealth.edu/woodwinds).

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