

SHOULD WE TAKE VITAMIN SUPPLEMENTS ?

The vitamin industry world wide is worth billions, largely because of subtle and persuasive advertising. Anyone with a good varied diet and free from important chronic disease is most unlikely to be short of any vitamins, so taking them is a complete waste of money. If the petrol tank in your car is showing two thirds full and you fill it up, it does not perform any better. It is also the case that overdosing on some vitamins can be very harmful, eg vitamin D (psychiatric and kidney problems) vitamin A (liver toxicity, and bone thinning). To dispel a few widely held myths, there is no solid evidence that vitamin supplementation can protect you against the common cold or heart disease.

So what should you do ? Give any money you would have spent on vitamins to charity, and eat a very varied diet with plenty of fruit and veg (bearing in mind that some fruits have a high sugar content).

There are some special medical circumstances in which there may be a genuine need to supplement eg for those with diseases of the gut which impair absorption eg Coeliac disease, some cases of Crohns' disease, and Pernicious Anaemia, chronic eating disorders, but nutrition should then be supervised by clinicians.

Whilst vitamin deficiency is rare, mineral deficiency in some countries may be quite common but more of that later.

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