

What We Need to Know About Supplements???

Walk down the supplement aisle at the pharmacy, and you'll see rows of pills promising to help with almost everything — memory, joints, sleep, bones, energy and more. It's no surprise that supplements are popular among older adults seeking ways to feel better and stay healthy as we age. Deciding which supplements to take can be complicated, how to ensure what the label says is inside the supplement and safe, and how much should I spend?

How to select multivitamins

It's always best to get nutrients from food. Fruit, vegetables, and other plant foods contain fiber, other foods provide good-for-you compounds not found in supplements. Some people may benefit from taking multivitamins, including those who are on low-calorie diets, have poor appetite, or avoid certain foods like meat or dairy and seniors. Older adults frequently don't get enough vitamin B12, vitamin D or calcium and absorption capabilities decline. There are recent studies indicating that multivitamin for seniors may help modestly to improve memory and slow cognitive decline!

Take note, daily values, or recommended daily intakes for nutrients, refer to everything you get from food, drink, and supplements, not recommended amounts of supplements alone. You shouldn't think that a supplement needs to cover 100% of your nutrient needs. In fact, for some nutrients, doses well above the daily value can be dangerous, especially when added to what you are already getting from food. One weakness of supplement regulations is that manufacturers are not required to indicate when an ingredient exceeds safe levels, what's known as tolerable upper limits. For example, high doses of vitamin B6 can damage nerves. Too much vitamin A may cause headaches, liver damage, weakened bones, and birth defects. And excess iron may give you an upset stomach and, over time, damage the liver and other organs.

How to confirm the ingredients and safety of a supplement?

Part of the challenge is that supplements are less tightly regulated than prescription medications and testing has shown that what's inside supplement bottles can vary widely. For that reason, **ALWAYS** look for supplements **verified by third parties** like NSF (National Sanitation Foundation International- 80 year old company) , USP (U S Pharmacopeia- 200 year old company), UL (UL Solutions- new to certifications), Tested to be Trusted (CVS) or CL (Consumer Lab- 27 years) to certify purity and quality. Their function ensures the

product contains specific ingredients and amount stated on the label and does not contain harmful contaminants.

Shop By Price

A vitamin's price is no indication of quality. Inexpensive, independently verified multivitamin is just as good as a product that costs 10 to 20 times more, according to our expert, in a recent NY Times article. Costco's Kirkland Signature Daily Multi or Adult 50+ Mature Multi at a cost of only 4¢ per day. Next inexpensive choice, 21st Century multivitamins, available at drug stores and online. Also, can't go wrong with Walgreens and CVS store-brand multivitamins.

We need to question when a product promotes, it contains the most bioavailable form of nutrients (body will absorb better), undergone extensive testing, or nutrients extracted from food. In many cases, this distinction won't matter. For example, vitamin C (ascorbic acid) molecules extracted and chemically refined from a plant are the same as one created synthetically. How well your body absorbs nutrients depends not only on the form of the ingredient but on other factors, such as your age, diet, and health condition. Ensure third party verification over the cost!!!!

Swiss Overnight Oats from Nutrition Action May/June 2026; Serves 4

¾ cup plain Greek yogurt	¾ cup oatmeal
1 Tbsp lemon juice	¼ cup water
1 large apple, grated (unpeeled)	1 cup berries
½ cup of nuts or seeds	4 tsp honey

- In a large bowl, whisk together yogurt, lemon juice, and ¼ cup water. Stir in apples.
- Add the oats and gently stir until just combined.
- Transfer to a container with a lid. Cover and refrigerate overnight.
- In the morning, scoop generous ½ c cup portion into a bowl and top with berries, nuts, and seeds and drizzle with honey.

Per serving: calories 250, total fat 12 g, Sat fat 1.5g, carbs 31, fiber 5 g, added sugar 5 g
Protein 8 grams; sodium 75mg

References: www.nytimes.com/wirecutter/reviews/best-cheap-multivitamins, www.nytimes.com/wirecutter/reviews/best-cheap-multivitamins, www.herself-health.com/vitaminsforseniorsover70

Written by Laurie Zirilli, registered dietitian, contract RD for Oneida County Office for the Aging. Oneida County OFA provides nutrition counseling and education for the aging. Questions about services and programs for older adults and caregivers, including the Senior Nutrition Program, should call Oneida County Office for the Aging at (315) 798-5456.