

[IMAGE]

Know Your Fundamental Nutrition

By Julie T. Chen, MD

My patient population sees me because they believe in natural options for disease prevention and treatment. However, not everyone believes in supplements and with the confusing study reports out these days about how some supplements are harmful, not everyone is comfortable taking them.

I would like to take this opportunity to clarify some issues with these studies. When you are reading summarized reports about various studies, you should know that in order to truly understand what these studies show, you have to go look at the primary study article and not a summary article. Frequently, the poor results apply only to a specific population of people or that they did the study in a way that does not apply to clinical practice. Allow me to explain.

For example, the studies that look at vitamin D at high dosages leading to more fractures were done with dosages that are not used in clinical practice so would not apply to the general public. Even in prior studies with dosages closer to that used in clinical practice, those studies showed benefit, not harm, in regards to fractures.

Another example is a study done on calcium and vitamin D causing more heart attacks in women. This study looked at a subgroup of a larger study and drew that conclusion but various other subgroup studies done on that larger study did not show the same result. The hypothesis is that the calcium and vitamin D, when taking abruptly higher dosages in a woman who has never taken calcium or D supplementation, might be concerning but is still not definitive. The recommendation is to take calcium and D if osteoporosis is a concern and to adjust dosing slowly upwards toward the health goal dosage.

So, as you can see, the studies are complex and if you are concerned, you should print out the primary article and bring it to your doctor so that he or she can explain it to you. In regards to those who are very much a believer of supplements, there are a few that you should make sure you have in your supplement cabinet.

1. Turmeric or Curcumin with black pepper to improve systemic absorption
2. Fish oil and Omega-3

3. Resveratrol
4. Free form amino acids
5. Vitamin D3

Turmeric is seen to have some anti-cancer properties as well as being anti-inflammatory. There are numerous other health benefits but for the purposes of this article, I will stick to these two and you can read more about it and ask your physician about it.

Fish oil or omega-3 and resveratrol also has many health benefits but it can be helpful as an adjunctive therapy for anti-inflammation, sugar metabolism, and high cholesterol or triglycerides, just to name a few benefits. You should of course clear all supplements by your physician before taking them and make sure that there are not any contraindications for you to use them.

Finally, vitamin D3 and free form amino acids are helpful for many body functions. Vitamin D is a hormone in the body and is important for bone health, mood, and even has effects on cancer if that is a concern in your family history. Free form amino acids are more easily absorbed and usable than long-chain amino acids and they are used in many organ functions. So these two supplements are meant as gap fillers since many people are not getting enough in their diet.

While there are many other supplements that should also belong in your supplement cabinet, the most important thing to keep in mind is to clear your supplements by your chiropractor first before using them and to always update all your physicians of your supplement list so that they can help you avoid complications and drug-supplement interactions.

Dr. Julie T. Chen is board-certified in internal medicine and fellowship-trained and board-certified in integrative medicine. She has her own medical practice in San Jose, Calif. She is the medical director of corporation wellness at several Silicon Valley-based corporations, is on several medical expert panels of Web sites and nonprofit organizations, is a recurring monthly columnist for several national magazines, and has been featured in radio, newspaper, and magazine interviews. She incorporates various healing modalities into her practice including, but is not limited to, medical acupuncture, Chinese scalp acupuncture, clinical hypnotherapy, strain-counterstrain osteopathic manipulations, and biofeedback. To learn more, visit www.makinghealthyez.com.

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