

Lakeview Community Wellness Center Orthopaedic Connection

Four Supplements Seniors Should Take

By Thomas J. Haverbush, M.D.
Orthopaedic Surgeon

Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

I am not a huge fan of supplements in general, but I know there is a place for them. It's just that I see so many patients in the office who are taking a lot more supplements than they need. Patients don't start out taking all of them at once. Supplements get added over time and before long you are taking many more than you need. Besides that they can be expensive.

So what is my point?

Based on government guidelines and the advice to me of some university nutritionists, everyone over 60 should seriously consider taking these four dietary supplements.

Multivitamins
Vitamin D
Calcium
Fish Oil

Multivitamins

As people get older their diets may not be as well balanced as they once were. It's hard to meet all nutritional needs unless you have a balanced diet and adequate calorie intake. Unless you are positive you are getting the basic vitamin and mineral amounts in a well rounded diet, the first supplement to consider is a multivitamin. Honestly, who of us, unless you are a Registered Dietitian, knows we are getting everything we need from food? Impaired capacity to absorb nutrients as you age and fewer vitamins and minerals in some foods make taking a daily multivitamin essential.

Vitamin D

Research shows there is practically an epidemic of Vitamin D deficiency in the United States. Some physicians feel ninety percent of adults age 51- 70 are deficient in Vitamin D.

Three groups of people are especially prone to Vitamin D deficiency.

Postmenopausal women
Black Americans
The elderly

Higher levels of Vitamin D intake are recommended for older men and women because the amount made by the body decreases with age. Without Vitamin D bones can become osteoporotic leading to fractures.

There are a lot of different recommendations out there, but a growing number of physicians (including me) are recommending a minimum intake of 1000i.u. per day. The National Osteoporosis Foundation recommends this.

However in patients over 60 and postmenopausal women, 2000i.u. of Vitamin D is required.

Calcium

Take 1200mg of Calcium daily for optimal bone health. Split the Calcium into two 600mg doses to allow for better absorption. Calcium not only keeps bones healthy, but also helps muscles function well and helps normalize blood pressure.

Fish Oil

Fish Oil can keep triglyceride levels down. People who don't eat much fish could benefit from a fish oil supplement. Take Omega-3 Fish Oil 2000mg per day.

Some of my patients think taking fish oil is good for their joints, but this is not true. It is for your arteries particularly your coronary arteries, not your joints.

Supplements for Special Needs

Eye macular degeneration

Take extra zinc and the antioxidant vitamins C and E and beta carotene.

Knee Arthritis

I recommend Glucosamine/Chondroitin in certain cases for patients who have painful knees from mild to moderate osteoarthritis. I don't recommend it for every patient I see with arthritis. I may recommend it after taking a history, examining the patient and seeing their standing x-rays of the knees.

In closing, there are hundreds of supplements and thousands of claims supporting their use. I have tried to focus your attention on what I believe to be the basic four; Multivitamins, Vitamin D, Calcium and Fish Oil. It is always best to check with your doctor before adding any supplements

All Orthopaedic Surgery problems can be evaluated at the LCWC or at the office in Alma, 315 Warwick Dr., Alma, Michigan. Please call 989-463-6092 to schedule an appointment at either location. Future LCWC Clinic dates are February 5 and February 19, 2010.

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free, functional lives.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush