

Ask The Dietitian

Making Sense Of Multivitamins

(NAPSA)—One hundred million Americans take a vitamin or dietary supplement daily. If you're one, you may want to know some of the most frequently asked questions about the best-selling vitamin, the multi. Responses are provided by Lynn Laboranti, a registered dietitian and continuing education specialist.



Lynn Laboranti

Why do I need a multivitamin? Our bodies cannot absorb all the nutrients found in the foods we eat, so a daily multivitamin is much like a nutritional insurance policy; it ensures the recommended daily allowance (RDA) for specific vitamins and minerals are obtained. This is important because according to the most recent Healthy Eating Index survey conducted by the USDA, most Americans do not eat a healthy balanced diet on a daily basis.

Do men have special nutritional needs? Yes. As men age, additional nutrients like lycopene, an important antioxidant for prostate health, and vitamins E and C are needed. Men should also select a multivitamin formulated for their gender and age, such as

Nature Made Essential Man or Essential Man 50+.

Do women have special nutritional needs? Yes! A woman's nutritional needs are a bit more complex than a man's, because of her varied life stages including childbearing, premenopausal and menopause. A woman of childbearing age should consider calcium, folic acid and iron supplementation because the female diet often lacks these nutrients. Nature Made Essential Woman and Essential Woman 50+ provide women with a good foundation of nutrients needed to support health and well-being.

How do nutritional needs change with age? Older Americans should take a multivitamin rich in antioxidants. These nutrients fight free radicals—environmental compounds that cause premature aging. Women may also want to consider taking additional calcium with vitamin D to prevent osteoporosis. Older Americans also need less iron. Deficiency of certain vitamins, such as vitamin B12, may occur with age and a multivitamin can help ensure adequate B12 intake. These changing nutritional needs show why it's important to take a multivitamin designed for your age.

How does frequent exercise affect my nutritional needs?

Take a multivitamin with high antioxidant levels to combat the stress regular exercise puts on the body. Antioxidant vitamin E may enhance muscle recovery and the antioxidant vitamin C and some B vitamins may be flushed out of the body with perspiration. B vitamins also help support healthy energy levels. Highly active adults may consider a product like Nature Made Essential Mega multivitamin.

When should I take my multivitamin? It's a personal preference. I would recommend taking a multi at mealtime for best absorption of nutrients. The fat content of meals can help absorb the fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, K) found in the multivitamins. Taking your multi with food also helps to prevent stomach upset.

How can I learn more? Ask a registered dietitian or nutritionist or post a question at the "Ask The Expert" section of www.naturemade.com. Also check with your physician or pharmacist to make sure supplements won't interact with your prescriptions and/or if you have a special health concern.