



# THE PLAIN DEALER

## NUTRI-NEWS Q&A

### People with diabetes don't need supplemental vitamins and minerals

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I've seen a number of supplements on the market for people with diabetes. Could these be useful for me?

A variety of products on the market are targeted at people with diabetes. Many are multi-ingredient cocktails of herbal, vitamin and mineral supplements. In many cases, ingredients in combination supplements appear to have been chosen via a well-intentioned though possibly unjustified logical leap. For instance, we know that diabetes is a major cause of blindness and lutein is important in vision, so lutein is included in a supplement intended for people with diabetes.

In addition to supplements targeted specifically at diabetes, some people choose single-ingredient herbal, vitamin, or mineral supplements that they have heard may be beneficial.

Harvard Medical School's Dr. Gloria Yeh and co-workers published a review of herbs and dietary supplements used for blood sugar control in the journal *Diabetes Care* in 2003. The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine of the National Institutes of Health has also reviewed the use of dietary supplements in diabetes. I've summarized some of their conclusions in the table, along with comments of my own.

The RDAs appear to meet the vitamin-mineral needs of people with diabetes, says the American Diabetes Association in its *Nutrition Recommendations for Diabetes*. Therefore, people with diabetes generally need no special supplement regimen. Groups that may need supplementation are persons who are following extreme weight-reduction diets, the elderly, strict vegetarians, and persons with health conditions that affect their nutritional status. The diabetes association says specifically that chromium and magnesium are beneficial only in cases of deficiency.

The bottom line is that a standard multivitamin-mineral supplement may be the way to go for now. If you choose to use supplements as part of your treatment plan for diabetes, you should let your health provider know, as dietary supplements may interact with medications and necessitate adjustments in dosage.

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