

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics reinforces importance of food, not supplements

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While dietary supplements can help some people meet their nutrition needs, eating a wide variety of nutrient-rich foods is the best way for most people to obtain the nutrients they need to be healthy and reduce their risk of chronic disease, according to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

Two newly published studies in *Annals of Internal Medicine*, and an accompanying editorial, indicate there is no clear benefit for most healthy people to consume vitamin [supplements](#).

"These findings support the evidence-based position of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics that the best nutrition-based strategy for promoting optimal health and reducing the risk of chronic disease is to wisely choose a wide variety of foods," said registered dietitian nutritionist and Academy spokesperson Heather Mangieri. "By choosing nutrient-rich foods that provide the most [nutrients](#) per calorie, you can build a healthier life and start down a path of health and wellness. Small steps can help you create [healthy habits](#) that will benefit your health now and for the rest of your life."

The Academy's position on supplements also acknowledges that nutrient supplements may be necessary in special circumstances. "Additional nutrients from supplements can help some people meet their nutrition needs as specified by science-based nutrition standards such as the

Dietary Reference Intakes," Mangieri said.

Mangieri offered tips for developing a nutrient-rich eating plan:

- Start each day with a healthy breakfast that includes whole grains, fat-free or low-fat dairy for calcium and vitamin D, and vitamin C-rich foods.
- Replace refined grains with whole grains like whole-grain breads and cereals and brown rice.
- Pre-washed salad greens and pre-cut vegetables make great quick meals or snacks.
- Eat fresh, frozen or canned (without added sugar) fruit for snacks and desserts.
- Include at least two servings of omega-3 rich seafood per week.
- Don't forget beans, which are rich in fiber and folate.

The recent increase in sales of supplements may not have been accompanied by an increase in consumers' knowledge about what they are taking, according to the Academy's position.

"Registered dietitian nutritionists have the knowledge and experience to educate consumers on safe and appropriate selection and use of supplements," Mangieri said. "RDNs make evidence-based recommendations for consumers, while helping them develop a healthful eating plan that takes into account all of their dietary and lifestyle needs and tastes."

More information: "Enough Is Enough: Stop Wasting Money on Vitamin and Mineral Supplements." Eliseo Guallar, MD, DrPH; Saverio Stranges, MD, PhD; Cynthia Mulrow, MD, MSc, Senior Deputy Editor; Lawrence J. Appel, MD, MPH; and Edgar R. Miller III, MD, PhD. *Ann Intern Med.* 2013;159(12):850-851-851. [DOI: 10.7326/0003-4819-159-12-201312170-00011](https://doi.org/10.7326/0003-4819-159-12-201312170-00011)

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