

**September 2017**

## **TAKING A MULTIVITAMIN IS SHOWN TO FILL NUTRIENT GAPS IN OUR DIET**

- Taking multivitamin and mineral supplements significantly increase nutrient intakes and decrease nutrient deficiencies, new study finds
- Well-meaning advice to get nutrients from diet alone ignores how people *actually* eat
- Adequate micronutrients essential for good health across lifespan

A major new study published in *Nutrients*<sup>i</sup> confirms that regularly taking multivitamin and mineral supplements (VMS) is the best way to ensure you are getting sufficient essential nutrients, versus diet alone.

Research in America analysed data from 10,698 adults from the National Health and Nutrition Examinations Surveys (NHANES) 2009 to 2012 and looked at intakes of 17 nutrients from food alone versus food plus VMS.

The study conclusively found that taking VMS, at any frequency, significantly increased nutrient intakes and decreased the occurrence of inadequate intakes for most micronutrients, especially “under-consumed” nutrients such as vitamin A and iron, as compared to food alone. The National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS) found these nutrients are also under-consumed in the UK<sup>ii</sup>.

The effects were more pronounced among people who took VMS regularly compared to sporadically, with the results showing that people who took VMS for 21 or more days per month eliminated most nutrient inadequacies.

Dr Carrie Ruxton, from the Health and Food Supplements Information Service commented, “This study is really important in setting the record straight on the value of multivitamins and minerals. We know these nutrients are key to our health and wellbeing and low levels have been shown to have negative health impacts.”

“Unfortunately, all too often it is said that you can get all the nutrition you need from a healthy, balanced diet. But this ignores how most people *actually* eat. A lot of people don’t consume the full-spectrum of micronutrients needed to support optimum health.”

Adequate intake of micronutrients is essential for nearly all metabolic, developmental and growth processes, and for good health across the lifespan.

Data from the UK’s National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS) Years 5 and 6 revealed a picture of low intake across a number of nutrients<sup>iii</sup>. Children aged 11-18 had intakes below the Lower Reference Nutrient Intake (LRNI, the level at which deficiency is likely to occur) for Vitamin A which is crucial for eye and immune health. Girls aged 11-18 and women aged 19-64 had intakes below the LRNI for riboflavin, at 20% and 13% respectively, which is essential for the nervous system, skin and eye health. Around one fifth of adults aged 19-64 had low blood levels of vitamin D which is important for immune health, bone health and muscle growth development and function.

A substantial proportion of children aged 11-18 had intakes below the LRNI for all minerals, including iron (essential for the formation of haemoglobin which transports oxygen around the body) with 48% of girls 11-18 below the LRNI. 27% of women aged 19-64 also had iron levels below the LRNI and a substantial proportion of adults over 19 had low intakes of magnesium (for nervous system, muscle movement and the formation of healthy bones and teeth), potassium (for cardiovascular health) and selenium (for immune health).

Dr Ruxton adds, “Topping up the diet with a daily multivitamin and mineral plus an omega-3 supplement will help to counteract potential dietary shortfalls and assist people in reaching the recommended levels of key nutrients which we all need to support good health.”

**For further information or to arrange an interview with an HSIS spokesperson, please contact the HSIS press office [hsis@nexuspr.com](mailto:hsis@nexuspr.com) or call 020 7052 8888. Out of hours please call 07730 682111 or 07482 107207**

## **ABOUT HSIS**

HSIS (the Health and Food Supplements Information Service) is a communication service providing accurate and balanced information on vitamins, minerals and other food supplements to the media and to health professionals working in the field of diet and nutrition. Find out more at [www.hsis.org](http://www.hsis.org).

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<sup>i</sup> Blumberg JB, Frei BB, Fulgoni VL, Weaver CM, Zeisel SH. *Impact of Frequency of Multi-Vitamin/Multi-Mineral Supplement Intake on Nutritional Adequacy and Nutrient Deficiencies in U.S. Adults*. *Nutrients* **2017**, 9(8), 849; doi:[10.3390/nu9080849](https://doi.org/10.3390/nu9080849)

<sup>ii</sup> NDNS data from Years 5 and 6 found that children aged 11-18 had intakes below the Lower Reference Nutrient Intake (LRNI, the level at which deficiency is likely to occur) for Vitamin A, while 48% of girls aged 11-18 were below the LRNI for iron with a further 27% of women aged 19-64.

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