



title: Know Your Nutrition Keats/Pivot
author: Clark, Linda A.
publisher: McGraw-Hill Professional
isbn10 | asin: 0879834013
print isbn13: 9780879834012
ebook isbn13: 9780071404686
language: English
subject Nutrition.
publication date: 1984
lcc: TX355.C56 1984eb
ddc: 641.1
subject: Nutrition.

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Know Your Nutrition

Linda Clark

Keats Publishing, Inc.



New Canaan, Connecticut

Author's Note

Due to an increasing number of letters and requests for information I can no longer answer personal letters. I am not legally allowed to prescribe, recommend or advise on individual problems. I can, however, report on research which is available in my books, articles, scientific journals and elsewhere.

KNOW YOUR NUTRITION

Pivot Health Edition published 1984

by Keats Publishing, Inc.

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Parts of this book were published previously in *Let's Live* magazine

ISBN: 0-87983-401-3

Library of Congress Catalog Number: 80-84437

Printed in the United States of America

Keats Publishing, Inc.

27 Pine Street (Box 876)

New Canaan, Connecticut 06840

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1

Should You Take Vitamins and Minerals?

Nutrition is a young and growing science. Probably one of the greatest controversies of this century is concerned with the question of whether or not we should take vitamins and minerals. More and more people *are* taking them in spite of the fact that the government agency, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), looks upon them with disfavor, particularly if used in substantial amounts. The FDA claims that vitamin and mineral supplements are not necessary for health because our food contains everything we need for health.

Many authorities challenge this statement and supply sobering proof to the contrary, as you will see. The FDA also believes that only faddists consider chemical fertilizers and insecticides poisonous for the land upon which our food is grown. They do not believe that soil depletion (from continuous overcropping) can result in deficient foods and consequently in malnourished people who eat

these foods. The FDA also refuses to admit that the processing of the foods we buy in most stores can interfere with quality. And they categorically deny that much disease is due to improper diet, which now allows up to 5,000 questionable additives.

Let's face it: for the most part, we are what we eat. The type of fuel we take into our bodies is a large factor in determining our health. Vitamins and minerals should be present in our diet in some form: in our food, or as additional supplements, or both. But assimilation is also important.

Here are some questions many people are asking about this crucial health and food problem. The questions, with the answers from experts, should help clarify the confusion so that you can decide for yourself whether or not *you* wish to take vitamin and mineral supplements.

Isn't it True That America Is the Best-Fed Country in the World?

Although our national food supply is undeniably the most *abundant* in the world, much of it is grown in depleted soils and/or processed, refined, precooked (as in convenience foods and TV dinners), frozen and stored for prolonged periods. As a result, nutrients are diminished or lost from the food supply, and the public is getting many "empty calories."

Government surveys prove the point with these statistics:

Millions of teenagers have been found to be malnourished.

Millions of adults, even those with high incomes, do not have diets adequate for maintaining health.

American men rank thirteenth in world health; American women, sixth.

As examples of inadequate nutrition, 52 million people (29 percent of the American population) are receiving inadequate calcium; and 45 million are deficient in vitamin C.

Remember, this is *government* information based on actual tests. Therefore, by taking vitamin and mineral supplements, you can provide nutritional insurance for yourself; you can provide a margin of safety to compensate for the nutrients you are not getting in your diet.

Why Do Chemical Fertilizers Disturb the Soil and the Plants (Food) Grown There?

Chemical fertilizers stimulate growth, but, according to Dr. John Bircher of Switzerland: "To ensure the growth of wholesome plant tissues and also for their protection against disease, cultivated plants and vegetables require a *slow* balanced feeding of nutritious substances."

Chemicals have also become responsible, as you know, for polluting the soil, air and water, as well as the birds, fish and animals. The late Dr. William A. Albrecht, soil scientist and Dean Emeritus of the Department of Soils at the University of Missouri after fifty years there, made the following statements:

"Destruction of the soil by man's increasing use of chemicals is moving the U.S. and the rest of the world toward a disastrous famine.

"Soil fertility will decrease to the point that many farmers will fail economically.

"Man has been plundering the soil to such an extent that he is destroying its fertility. As a result the protein in our grain crops [alone] is rapidly diminishing. For example, the protein content of Kansas wheat ranged from 16 to 19 percent in 1940; in 1968, it ranged only from 11 to 13 percent.

"You've got to have fertile soil to grow healthy plants. Only healthy plants can provide proper feed for animals and humans.

"If you're not nourished properly, you won't survive. That's why sickness is increasing."

In other words, in the opinion of this scientist, who spent his life studying and teaching, sick soils result in sick animals and sick people. Extensive tests supply proof.

Why Are Foods Processed and What Is Wrong with the Practice?

Alan H. Nittler, M.D., tells us: "There are at least 3,000 different chemicals allowed in our foods, one way or another, and about 8,000 different ones in our total environment that we can eat, drink, breathe or touch. These chemicals include poisons, drugs, preservatives, sweeteners, softeners, alkalizers, acidifiers, hormones, dyes, antioxidants and hydrogenators. Some are poisonous and some are not. *But all are abnormal to the human body and must be neutralized or excreted or else disease or death result.*"

Even though the government has banned some of the chemical additives because they have been proved by laboratory tests to be toxic, even cancer-causing in some cases, others have been allowed to remain in the food due

to entreaties by the food processors who find their use profitable.

In addition to being processed, much of our food is refined. Important nutrients are removed from natural foods to prevent spoilage and assure a longer shelf life, thus eliminating financial loss for manufacturer and grocer alike. Refining food causes:

Loss of vitamins B and E in the milling of grains

Loss of essential fatty acids

Complete loss of vitamins and minerals in the manufacturing of white sugar, and some loss in the manufacturing of "raw" sugar

Loss of vitamin C in precooking (of convenience foods), storing and prolonged freezing

For those who contend that even if nutrients are removed from grains for breads and cereals, these foods are at least "enriched," usually eight or more natural vitamins and minerals are removed and only three synthetic ones are substituted. What is the effect of these enriched grain products on health? Roger J. Williams, Ph.D., director of the Clayton Biochemical Foundation at the University of Texas, found that commercially enriched bread is so low in nutrients that of sixty-four laboratory rats fed nothing but enriched bread, forty died of malnutrition and the growth of the survivors was severely stunted.

Because natural nutrients are so fragile and spoil so easily, some wit has said quite correctly: "Eat only the foods that spoil, but eat them before they do." Fortunately, many unprocessed natural foods are available at most health stores.

For self-protection we should raise our own food if possible.

What Are Organic Foods? Where Can I Find Them?

The word "organic" is being challenged in high places. Organic foods are those grown on properly nourished soil and not exposed to chemical fertilizers, pesticides, sprays or other pollutants. Due to the increasing demand, organic foods are becoming more readily available from some farmers, health stores and other food outlets. However, insist on proof on the label that the organic foods you buy are free of pollutants. Because organic foods take longer to grow and require more effort by the farmer than mass-production through chemicals and pesticides, they will probably be more expensive, if you can find them at all. Many of them must be shipped thousands of miles, since so few local sources are available. However, in terms of health, they are a good value. One expert says: "Our food and, in turn, ourselves suffer from nutritional imbalances."

Four doctors, quoted in Ehrenfried Pfeiffer's book, *Biodynamic Farming and Gardening* (a form of organic farming and gardening by natural methods), state that their patients were healthier as a result of eating whole, organic foods.

So search everywhere for organic foods (or raise your own). Look for organic farmers in your own neighborhood. Write *Organic Gardening and Farming*, Customer's Service, Emmaus, Pennsylvania 18049, and/or Natural Foods Associates, Atlanta, Texas 75551. And insist upon *real* organic produce. One spokesman for the Dietetics Food Industry, warns that all that glitters may not be gold. He recommends that organic food must *really* be organic, be stamped with the producer's name and guar-

antee, and not be a substitute to be palmed off to the unsuspecting public just to make a fast buck.

What Are Vitamins?

There is a definition of a vitamin in the 1939 Handbook of the Department of Agriculture. This volume is called *Food and Life*, and is one of the masterpieces of nutritional knowledge, far ahead of its time. The definition states that "vitamins are substances that are essential for life and growth." (This definition applies also to minerals.)

Another definition of a vitamin is given by Rebecca Kirby, in reporting nutritional research for Natural Food Associates, an organization long headed by Joe D. Nichols, M.D. She says: "The foods one eats (or should eat) are the primary source of the life-supporting nutrients."

What about Those University Nutritionists Who Say We Don't Need to Take Supplements, Just Eat a Good Diet?

Such statements as these mystified me, too, until I learned what was going on. In most cases the answer seems to be that the huge vested interests including the food processors, some drug companies, and even the American Medical Association (AMA) and the FDA perhaps began to realize that nutritional foods and supplements, plus natural, unprocessed foods, were becoming a threat to their financial survival.

More than once a campaign against such foods and supplements has been attempted, and key spokesmen were asked to attack health foods and supplements. There is written proof that some universities were subsidized by

these vested interests in return for the attacks against natural foods and supplements by members of their faculty. 1 Some doctors and members of universities, however, may be entirely innocent of collaboration. A growing number are becoming concerned, even alarmed, over the problem.

What Does RDA Mean?

RDA stands for *Recommended Dietary Allowances* which apply to the so-called needs of vitamin and mineral potencies for people of different ages, sex, etc. These RDAs, issued every four years, are generally held in contempt by many professional nutritionists, nutritionally oriented doctors and manufacturers of nutritional supplements, because they are so low.

Many of these detractors believe that the RDA levels are dominated by the food industry. They point out that the nutrients are determined on the basis of animal, not human studies, and are behind the times in knowledge. Dr. Charles T. McGee, M.D. in his book *How to Survive Modern Technology* (Keats Publishing) states: "The RDA values have become the backbone of the analytic approach to nutrition . . . [yet] current RDA levels are set at values which will [only] sustain life. There is much evidence that higher levels . . . would help millions of people prevent degenerative diseases . . . Dr. Linus Pauling has stated that rather than keeping us in good health the current levels of the RDAs . . . will keep us in a state of poor health."

Manufacturers are required by the FDA to list these RDAs on labels of supplements, or else run the risk of

not having their products be accepted for sale to the public.

What many people do not know is that there are *two* sets of RDAs, each set controlled by a different organization. The original RDAs are selected by the Food and Nutrition Board of the National Academy of Sciences, which honestly admits that their RDAs are based on available nutritional knowledge of "practically all healthy persons." (Their goal, they claim, is to maintain health, not treat disease.) They state, "We are well aware that present knowledge of nutritional needs is incomplete."

On the other hand, the group which insists on RDAs appearing on labels is the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) which apparently "borrows" the RDAs as researched and issued by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS). (The FDA is said to use the highest level of the male allowance of the NAS, an allowance which is to the FDA's credit.) Even so, the NAS warns the public, "Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA) should not be confused with United States Recommended Daily Allowances (USRDA), a set of values derived by the Food and Drug Administration as standards for nutritional labelling." (From National Academy of Sciences: *Recommended Dietary Allowances*, Eighth edition, 1974, available for sale from NAS, 2101 Constitution Ave., Washington, D.C. 20418.)

According to research, they are a mere drop in the health bucket. Dr. Roger J. Williams says: "The building of metabolic machinery cannot possibly take place if even one little cog is missing. Adequate food must contribute the total package. A food or food mixture (or choice of supplements), *in order to support life*, must not merely supply six vitamins, five minerals and four amino acids

(protein factors). It must supply the *full* quota: everything that is needed to build body machinery."

The Food and Nutrition Board believes, like the FDA, that we should get our nutrients from food. Yet a recent report states that 95 percent of our food is being tampered with. It is subject to unbelievable processing to increase sales or shelf life. Many vitamins are removed and a few synthetics, if any, are substituted.

Can you determine the precise amount of vitamins and minerals that should be present in each food you buy in order to protect your health? Robert S. Harris, Ph.D., one of our most distinguished nutritionists, a member of the Department of Nutrition and Food Science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), answers this question with a resounding "No!" There are too many variables in the foods, and *you* can't tell with the naked eye what is in them. But a machine can.

There is an X-ray type of machine, used by Dr. Firman E. Bear, at Rutgers University, that can see into the innards of vegetables and fruits. Although two carrots may look alike to you, to the machine the nutrients may show up as high in one carrot and practically nil in another.

Our food producers, by picking fruits green for shipping, storing them for a long time, blanching and freezing them for long periods, and precooking them as in convenience foods, are not providing you with the nutrients you think you are getting or are paying for. All these processes cause loss of vitamin/mineral content and shortchange *you*. But that is not all.

Supermarkets know that you do know the brighter the color of a food, the higher the vitamin content. So some of them throw hidden, colored spotlights on the display of their fresh produce so that the green vegeta-

bles look greener, yellow vegetables yellower and meats redder. But put these foods in natural daylight, and you will be startled at their anemic appearance.

This is why dyes are also used for oranges in some states, sweet potatoes, red-skinned white potatoes and packaged foods. The fact that some of these dyes have been found, even by the FDA, to cause cancer, but are still allowed to remain in the food to help protect the income of the manufacturer, is never mentioned. And did you know that there is often an aroma-wafer hidden behind the bread section? It throws out tantalizing synthetic odors of freshly baked bread to entice customers to buy something that has had most of the natural vitamins and minerals removed, with a few synthetics added as replacements, and has been spiked with preservatives that have, in many cases, been proved poisonous.

This does not mean that there is nothing safe at a supermarket. Many of us have to fall back upon it for some of our supplies. But you *must* use your eyes and read labels! The listing of some chemical ingredients is required on the labels. But I have long said that if you cannot pronounce the names of the chemicals in the food, don't buy them.

It is true that because of the FDA's recommendation the nutritional contents of foods are listed on the labels by the manufacturers. But many of these labels are difficult to understand, for they are too technical or do not state the proportions of nutrients included. This brings us back full circle to the fact that in order to be *sure* we are getting our full supply of nutrients in our diet, we probably need vitamin and mineral supplements. Due to public demand, some supermarkets are beginning to sell some health foods as well as supplements.

Why Do Most Doctors Condemn or Fail to Suggest Vitamin and Mineral Supplements?

Perhaps you have already found that when you ask your doctor if you should take vitamins or minerals, he gives one of these answers: (a) they are not necessary; (b) they won't hurt you; or (c) a drug, which he would rather prescribe, will do the job better and quicker. However, drugs *suppress* symptoms instead of curing them (for example, an aspirin relieves a headache, but does not remove the cause), whereas good nutrition helps the body to rebuild itself. This takes longer than drugs, but the results are eventually more satisfactory. Some doctors use both drugs for quick relief and nutrition for body/health rebuilding.

The reason so many doctors fail to prescribe, and instead condemn, vitamin and mineral supplements (although more and more are actually prescribing them in addition to drugs) is because they were not taught nutrition in medical schools. Miles H. Robinson, M.D., who acted as cross-examiner of witnesses in FDA hearings against vitamins, minerals and health foods, reported: "It is highly significant that [even] FDA witnesses have repeatedly testified that the average doctor is woefully ignorant about vitamin deficiencies."

There appears to be another reason why some doctors prescribe drugs instead of vitamin and mineral supplements plus a highly nutritious diet. As Omar Garrison states in his book: "There is a cozy liaison which, from its inception, has existed between the FDA and the AMA and sometimes between the federal agency and large drug manufacturers or food processors." 2

George W. Crane, Ph.D., M.D., in his foreword in

the same book, states: "In my syndicated newspaper column I have described the FDA as the political Charlie McCarthy on the knee of the American Medical Association, for it often parrots the orders from the AMA home office in Chicago with or without any convincing sufficient evidence.

"As a member of the AMA myself, I appreciate many of its worthy motives. But I don't let it do my scientific thinking for me on all matters, for it has often been proved wrong."

Another reason the AMA discourages the use of supplements is startling. In a health magazine published by the AMA for the general public, this statement appeared: "The greater danger is that people use vitamins to treat their own illnesses *instead of going to doctors*. [Emphasis mine.] This self-medication is a greater danger to the public than the danger of taking an overdose of vitamins." 3

But what are you going to do if the doctor is not getting you well? Taking such harmless food substances as vitamins and minerals, even if self-administered, in overdoses (a rare occurrence) is far different from taking dangerous drugs even when doctor-administered.

In China, for generations the people paid doctors to keep them well. When they got sick, the payments stopped. If more doctors in other countries would use nutrition to keep their patients well, they would be more highly respected. A few have already learned this lesson and have shifted from drugs to nutritional treatment with great success. The story of how one doctor accomplished this is explained in his book, *A New Breed of Doctor*.⁴ It can be done, although this doctor was severely disciplined for practicing natural nutrition: his license was revoked.