

Taking Supplements Does Not Guarantee Health Benefits, Research Finds

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Category : Health

Unlocking Word Meanings

Read the following words/expressions found in today’s article.

- 1. **detrimental** / **detriˈment(ə)l** / (adj) – causing harm
Example: Taking medicine without a doctor’s advice can be **detrimental**.
- 2. **slight** / **slɑt** / (adj) – very small in amount
Example: There was a **slight** increase in his temperature.
- 3. **ward off** / **wɔ:rd ɔf** / (phrasal) – to avoid being harmed by someone or something
Example: You should take some vitamins to **ward off** the flu.
- 4. **placebo** / **pləˈsiːboʊ** / (n) – a substance taken like medicine but does nothing to improve a patient’s condition
Example: The doctor gave the patient a **placebo** to make her feel better.
- 5. **portion** / **ˈpɔrˌfən, ˈpoʊr** / (n) – a part of a bigger amount
Example: When I’m on a diet, I eat smaller **portions** of rice.

Article

Read the text below.

Taking vitamin and mineral supplements is not necessarily beneficial to one’s health, a new study suggests.

The study, which was published in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*, involved a series of tests carried out from January 2012 to October 2017.

Researchers from St. Michael’s Hospital and the University of Toronto examined vitamins A, B1, B2, B3, B6, B9, C, D, and E. Minerals such as β (beta)-carotene, calcium, iron, zinc, magnesium, and selenium were also analyzed. These supplements had the highest consumption among the public.

Findings showed that calcium and vitamins C and D did nothing to fight against stroke, heart attack, cardiovascular disease, and even premature death. The researchers also found that vitamin B3, which is supposed to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease and cholesterol levels, can be **detrimental**. This is because it can cause a spike in blood sugar levels and a **slight** rise in the risk of death.

On the other hand, vitamin B9 proved to be effective in **warding off** stroke and heart disease.

Lead author Dr. David Jenkins shared that the researchers did not expect such few benefits from the consumption of the usual supplements. Additionally, New York University professor Marion Nestle said that these supplements are mere **placebos**, which make people think that their health is improving. Instead of depending on supplements for nutrients, Dr. Jenkins recommended relying on healthy **portions** of vegetables, fruits, and nuts.

On another note, a 2013 survey found that over 50% of Americans take supplements, while a 2017 study revealed that 29% of senior adults tend to take at least four different supplements.

Viewpoint Discussion

Enjoy a discussion with your tutor.

Discussion A

- Do you think that the study’s findings will affect the credibility of supplement manufacturers? Why or why not?

- Do you think more research should be conducted about the effects of supplements on other diseases? Explain.

Discussion B

- Would you rely on a popular medication without knowing its risks? Explain.

- Should pharmaceutical companies be more transparent when it comes to the possible risks of taking some medications? Explain.