

Supplements

TOPPING UP THE DIFFERENCE

Why we require supplements today.

BY MARY SAVAGE

Eating well takes work. Consuming a balanced, nutrient-dense diet every day takes commitment—just like staying in shape. It takes planning, shopping and cooking, only to repeat the cycle every week. It also takes initiative, creativity, and a healthy dose of trial and error.

And even with the best intentions, very few are this committed.

As a nutritional practitioner, I help people navigate the maze of “healthy eating” on a daily basis, and see, firsthand, what most people place in their grocery carts. Yes, we have a greater awareness when it comes to healthy eating today, but the majority of shoppers continue to eat the Standard American Diet (SAD), which is largely processed, convenient, and fast foods.

Grabbing an apple or a banana is a great “go-to” snack, but according to the new Canada Food Guide (CFG), half of the plate is now filled with fruits

and vegetables. When you consider that one serving is a half-cup, it would take roughly three to four “servings” to fill half of a plate.

Translation: if you have three meals per day, you’re looking at nine to 12 servings of fruits and vegetables, according to the new CFG graphic that illustrates this breakdown. In reality, over three quarters of Canadians are not meeting CFG requirements and the average Canadian eats three to four servings per day.

So if we’re only consuming one-third of the recommended amount, what foods pack the greatest nutritional punch? In order for our bodies to thrive in a balanced state, we need a certain number of vitamins, minerals, and micro-nutrients, plus proteins, healthy fats, and carbs.

100 years ago, our food was naturally nutrient-dense. The soil was black and brimming with vitamins and minerals.

Farmers used natural fertilizers (manure) and crops were rotated in order to prevent mineral depletion in the soil. Food wasn’t “fortified” with additional vitamins, it was innately nutritious.

But during the 1960’s, the environments in which “food” was bred, raised, sown and grown started to change, and today this evolution is apparent through the expansion of factory and industrial farms. The concept of genetically modified foods or GMO’s has all but become a household word. And the term “fortified” has given rise to an ever-growing list of ingredients that almost requires scientific interpretation.

Okay, let’s say you’re consuming six servings per day, but when you stop to consider our current food chain, one has to question how many nutrients you are actually absorbing. According to the book *The End of Food*, author Thomas Pawlick notes the following:

“Fruits and vegetables sold in Canadian

supermarkets today contain far fewer nutrients that they did 50 years ago. Vital vitamins and minerals have dramatically declined in some of our most popular foods. Take the potato, by far the most consumed food in Canada. The average spud has lost 100 percent of its vitamin A... 57 percent of its vitamin C and iron... and 28 percent of its calcium.”

It also lost 50 percent of its riboflavin and 18 percent of its thiamine. Of the seven key nutrients measured, only niacin levels have increased... The story is similar for 25 fruits and vegetables that were analyzed, according to a study by the *Globe and Mail* and *CTV*.

How do you bridge the nutritional deficiencies in your diet? As a practitioner, I encourage people to take a “collective” approach, which seeks to supplement your daily diet with “green drinks” and elixirs, fermented foods, superfoods and micro-greens, quality proteins, and high-grade multi-vitamins and supplements.

The body requires certain things that you can’t produce stand-alone. Take EFA’s (essential fatty acids), for example. They play a major role in heart and brain health, joint longevity, balanced blood sugar and healthy hormone levels, yet we don’t produce them automatically.

EFA’s are converted from foods that are high in omega-3, which means we must source high-quality omega-3

foods and consume enough, every day, in order to meet individual requirements.

We also need certain enzymes that slow in production as we age. Take for example the co-enzyme CoQ10. Most people have no idea what this is or why it’s important, until they learn it’s necessary for cellular respiration and a process called “ATP.” In essence, this enzyme supplies oxygen to the cells, which gives the body energy.

Unlike many vitamins and minerals, the body makes CoQ10. However, before the body can nourish the cells, it has to be converted to an active form. As we age, the conversion process starts to slow down in our 40’s, and it gradually becomes more difficult to convert it from the raw form to an active (usable) state.

When it comes to supplements, look for brands that are sourced from non-GMO whole foods with minimal processing (raw). Your body knows exactly what do with whole foods, whether it’s a nutrient-dense “Buddha bowl” or a capsule.

Read the list of ingredients. If there are a lot of fillers and binders, or things you simple don’t recognize, chances are it’s not derived from a whole food source. High-grade vitamins cost a bit more, but (1) why would you knowingly put synthetic vitamins into your body and (2) expect to feel energized, healthy, and strong.

Get your blood work done to identify deficiencies or abundances. It’s not uncommon for middle-aged women to tell me they’ve had blood work done and it showed high levels of B12. Yet they don’t supplement their diet with B vitamins. However, they eat two eggs every day—that happen to be “fortified” from factory farms.

And when it comes to fruits and vegetables, aim to eat or drink as many as possible—remember it’s a collective approach. The one fruit I eat every day is an avocado: straight from the shell, smeared on toast or swapped for mayo. This fruit is packed with vitamins, minerals, fibre, healthy fats, and has zero sugar.

Yes, eating well takes work. You have to be your own advocate, read labels, shop local, maybe start a garden and make a trip to your local health food store to pick up a few supplements. [Z](#)

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