

Are supplements really *necessary*?

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In 2016, consumers in the UK had more access to information about health and nutrition than ever before.

As well as a burst of print media and TV widely reporting information on the subject, the number of health and wellness, fitness and nutrition blogs has sky rocketed. Figures and brands like **The Hemsley Sisters** and **Deliciously Ella** are now very much part of the commercial mainstream and are spreading their health conscious message like wild fire. This is fantastic news for practitioners like me who work closely with patients' physical and emotional health will natural medicine. But is turning to a whole food, organic, toxin free diet enough to battle our health and wellness woes. In an ideal world, it would be. But, sadly, we are not living in one.

The market for supplements in the UK is worth an estimated £385 million per year and it's on the rise, fast. But why?

People are desperate to feel better. *"Is this new wonder supplement going to rid me of all my health worries?"* we ask ourselves. Even I am guilty of spending a little too much money on the new unpronounceable, magic herb from somewhere I've never heard of! But are these supplements necessary? If you spend two minutes on Google you'll find a host of varying arguments for and against the use of them and find yourself in an even more confused state than when you started.

A response I often hear is "but I have such a healthy diet! I don't eat gluten, dairy, sugar and I eat tons of vegetables."

From my perspective, having worked with patients presenting a range of conditions from IBS, migraines and anxiety to hyper/hypo-thyroidism, arthritis and eczema, I couldn't run my practice without some form of supplementation from bio-available, organic, wild crafted sources. When the body presents with symptoms, we have to ask ourselves the question "Why is this happening?". There could be a plethora of answers to this question, and part of my job is to find the answers, but pretty much across the board one of them will be "my body doesn't have the tools it needs".

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A response I often hear is *"but I have such a healthy diet! I don't eat gluten, dairy, sugar and I eat tons of vegetables."* There are many factors to consider in these cases but the main ones are the sheer amount of toxicity we have to combat in our day to day lives, a lack of nutrient content in our food in the first place and an inability to absorb the full nutrient make up of our food.

Our environment has changed exponentially over the last century, but our genes and cellular make up has not. Air and water pollution, food contamination, an increase in the use of pharmaceuticals and a rise in the use of preservatives, sugars and other toxins in our food all put our bodies under an intense amount of pressure. The body really isn't designed to deal with the barrage of physical and emotional stress we put it under.

A good example is magnesium deficiency. Magnesium is depleted from the body if you; drink coffee, alcohol, have excessive salt and sugar in your diet, sweat, physically exert yourself, experience any form of continued stress or use pharmaceutical and over the counter medicines. I am sure you can all tick at least two or three off this list. Now, magnesium is responsible for; activating muscles and nerves, creating energy in your body by activating adenosine triphosphate (ATP), helping digest proteins, carbohydrates and fats, serving as a building block for RNA

and DNA synthesis and is also a precursor for neurotransmitters like serotonin. So it's a pretty important one.

This is just one example of how many of us are deficient in this essential trace mineral. You can, and I highly recommend you do, get more magnesium in your diet from organic, whole food sources such as green leafy vegetables, beans, nuts, seeds, figs, avocado, short grain brown rice and buckwheat. However, to address the severity of deficiency in most people, the amount of magnesium in food alone is not enough. We have to consider is the digestive system efficiently absorbing the nutrients in the food? This is a whole other article in itself. Supplementation with magnesium has shown to have dramatic results in my experience working with patients presenting random, unexplainable symptoms like fatigue, aches, pains, migraines, nausea and more.

Mass production of food, a loss of the art of crop rotation and the increased use of herbicides and pesticides in the environment have all led to the depletion of minerals in the soil. Meaning there is a dramatic reduction of minerals going in to our food, and into our body. Combine this with the inability to absorb efficiently these minerals, due to stress and environmental toxicity (which can be remedied with supplementation), along with physical and emotional stress, then you have the perfect equation for vitamin and mineral deficiency.

Supplementation can be a fantastic, short term way, alongside mindful, health eating, to rebalance the bodies chemical make up to ensure ongoing good health. This is my experience, in my clinic, with my patients. The best way to address your own issues is to work alongside a good natural medicine practitioner.

I wish you all good health and well being.

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