

Supplements: Behind the Hype

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD



Dietary supplements, such as multivitamins and herbal remedies, generate \$30 billion annually in the U.S., and more than 90,000 products flood the marketplace. Despite the hype, you may need fewer supplements than you think. Here is a quick guide to choosing the right supplements for you.

Take only what you need. Supplements are meant to fill gaps in your diet or treat specific health conditions. First, work with your health care team to identify nutrient gaps. A blood test can tell if you are deficient in any vitamins or minerals and need to take a supplement.

Your health care provider can also recommend supplements that specifically work for medical conditions that you may have. For example, they may recommend you take iron for anemia or plant sterols for high cholesterol. There's potential harm — and no value — in taking supplements that you don't need.

Buy reputable brands. Unlike the drug industry, supplements are not regulated or tested for quality. The supplement industry is self-regulated, which means it's up to individual manufacturers to test their products. Luckily, some third-party companies offer supplement testing to provide peace of mind to consumers. Buy brands that have been tested by and bear the seal of any of these:

- United States Pharmacopeia (USP).
- National Sanitation Foundation (NSF).
- Natural Products Association (NPA).
- Isura Certified.

Buy from known suppliers. The knock-off supplement market is thriving, as are supplement theft and resale. Don't be duped. Buy supplements from well-known pharmacies or health food stores rather than online markets.

Skip the hype. Be wary of supplement companies that make lofty, unrealistic promises about their products and use words such as miracle, cure or magic. If it sounds too good to be true, it usually is.



Take a Real Vacation

Ah, vacation — a time to get away from it all, unwind, reconnect and enjoy each other's company or get away for some solo time.

Yet, devices often disrupt these moments, with texting, gaming and documenting every experience taking center stage. And with social media flooded with everyone else's adventures, it's easy to feel left out. This begs the question: Are device use and detailing every experience robbing us of the true essence of a vacation — disconnecting and enjoying each other's company?

Don't let devices take away from spending quality time with your loved ones.

Instead, turn them off and only use them for directions, calls and picture taking (no posting). Here are some ideas for device-free vacations and things to enjoy while on them:

- **Choose** an off-grid destination or a resort with limited cell service or no Wi-Fi. Ask a travel agent to suggest a few ideas. Many resorts and hotels are following this format. Some even lock up your devices to encourage more family or me time.
- **Explore** outdoor activities. Organize a nature scavenger hunt, take family hikes, visit national parks, play sports, bicycle and enjoy outdoor concerts.
- **Enjoy** a guided city tour together.
- **Prepare** meals together by taking a regional cooking course.
- **Enjoy** water sports such as swimming, snorkeling, surfing or boating.
- **Grab** a few beach chairs or blankets and read books together or just watch the sunrise or sunset.
- **Sign** up for a new family experience such as lessons in scuba diving, water skiing, snow skiing or ice skating.
- **Experience** a wellness retreat. Some places even have digital detox programs.
- **Spend** time on a dude ranch and experience a cowboy lifestyle.
- **Enjoy** camping or glamping at a new destination.
- **Travel** back in time and experience life at a historic location.

Exercising with Allergies and Asthma

Summer days are great for exercising outdoors unless you have allergies and/or asthma. That's because tree and grass pollens, which can trigger asthma and allergic reactions, are heavy this time of year.



However, that doesn't mean you should forego exercise. The American Lung Association emphasizes that exercising regularly is important. It can improve lung capacity to the heart, which pumps oxygen throughout your body, helping muscles stay strong.

So, whether pollen triggers sneezing, congestion and coughs from allergies and/or asthma, talk to your health care provider about strategies for safe physical activity and whether you need to take or increase certain medications when pollen allergens are in the air.

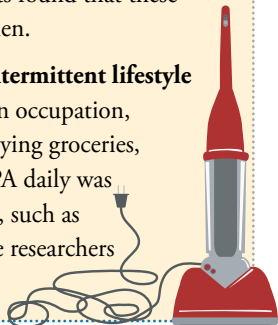
Tip for safer exercising in pollen season:

- If the weather is dry and windy, the American Academy of Otolaryngic Allergy (AAOA) advises opting for a treadmill or other indoor exercise.
- After being outdoors, shower to remove pollen from your skin and hair, and wash your exercise clothing. Use a nasal saline spray or rinse after outdoor exercise to remove allergens from your nose.
- If you have asthma but must do outdoor chores and pollen is high, the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology recommends wearing a dust and pollen-filtering mask.
- Whether you have allergies or asthma (or both) don't increase your medication without talking to your care provider. Even over-the-counter allergy drugs can have serious side effects when taking more than the recommended dosage or combined with other treatments.

Study: Daily Chores May Do Your Heart Good

Even a few minutes of physical activity is good for you. That's the conclusion of an international study headed by University of Sydney researchers who followed the daily routines of more than 13,000 women and 9,000 men for almost eight years. The participants were sedentary. The surprising results found that these brief sessions can improve heart health — at least, for women.

The researchers studied the health impact of vigorous intermittent lifestyle physical activity (VILPA) — movement associated with an occupation, housework or transportation, such as walking upstairs, carrying groceries, or walking through a parking lot. Just 3½ minutes of VILPA daily was associated with a lower risk of serious cardiovascular events, such as heart attacks and heart failure in women, but not men. The researchers haven't found an explanation for the sex difference.



Unsafe Skin Care Fads

The internet is inundated with skin care trends and advice. While some tips are helpful and harmless, others can be risky and even dangerous. How can you tell what is safe or not? The best advice is to ask your health care provider or pharmacist before trying anything new.

In the meantime, here are some fads to avoid:

Plumping your lips with hot peppers: Using hot peppers such as habanero to temporarily make your lips fuller can have dangerous side effects, including allergic reactions and rashes.

Passing on the sunscreen: Some social media influencers claim sunscreen can cause cancer, but there is no scientific evidence to support this. In fact, skipping sunscreen increases skin cancer risk. Protect yourself by avoiding midday sun, using broad-spectrum sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher) and wearing sun-protective clothing and a hat.

Taking supplements for skin and hair without consulting your health care provider: Since supplements aren't regulated, it's important to discuss taking them to avoid medication reaction and unsafe ingredients.

Using nasal tanning spray: Avoid nasal tanning spray, as they contain unregulated ingredients with potential harmful side effects. They also require sun exposure without sunscreen.

Performing your own cosmetic treatments: There are many risks when inexperienced people do these types of procedures at home, such as infection, burns, rashes and permanent scarring. The best advice is to have these treatments performed by a qualified dermatologist or a state-licensed professional (esthetician).

Face taping: Putting tape on the face overnight to minimize wrinkles may seem harmless. However, tapes can cause irritation and breakouts. You may also tear off skin when you remove the tape.



The Smart Moves Toolkit, including this issue's printable download, Mobility and Exercise, is at personalbest.com/extras/25V6tools.

6.2025