

## Choosing Vitamins & Supplements

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When it comes to obtaining nutrients that an individual's body needs, the best source is food, especially fruits and vegetables. However, circumstances may prevent some people from eating optimally every day. This is especially true for Myasthenia Gravis patients, who may want to explore the use of vitamin supplements.

The primary reason for taking supplements is to protect against gaps in the diet. Another reason is to make up for the vitamin and mineral deficiencies caused by some medications. For example, patients prescribed methotrexate, may be required to take folic acid. In cases of deficiencies, a physician may prescribe vitamins or supplements.

### **Ensuring Quality and Safety**

Unlike prescription and over-the-counter medications, vitamins and supplements are not regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). However, there are organizations that test these products for strength, purity, dissolution and disintegration. A label that indicates testing by a U.S. Pharmacopeia or other reliable source such as Consumerlab.com or NSF International can indicate whether a supplement is safe, effective and of good quality. If a supplement has not undergone testing from a reliable organization, it is preferable to switch to a vitamin or supplement that has passed one of these organization's standards.

It is very important to read the product label and check the dosage of the vitamin or supplement. There is no standard multivitamin formula. Therefore, the term "multivitamin" applies to any combination of vitamins and minerals in any strength, as long as they are listed. Labeled ingredients are listed in descending order of amount used.

Checking your vitamin and supplement labels is especially important with Myasthenia Gravis patients. Magnesium in most people has no ill effects but with Myasthenia patients, it can weaken them and give them the impression of an onset of a crisis. Keeping this in mind, if there are ever any doubts, always consult with a healthcare professional.

### **Talk with a Healthcare Professional**

The FDA suggests consulting a healthcare professional before starting any dietary supplement. Not only can a physician discuss with patients the safety of a particular product and whether that product is appropriate, but some vitamins and supplements may be contraindicated with current medications or nutritional needs.