

So What's Really in a Men's Multi-Vitamin?

Getting healthy can often seem like hard work, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle even harder. Unfortunately, even with the healthiest lifestyle it can still be a struggle to obtain optimal levels of nutrients for health. So what can we do to help ourselves and give our bodies a boost? Take a multi-vitamin of course!

So you head to your local health food store or pharmacy, stand there confused by all the different brands, wondering what the exotic sounding ingredients do and which multi-vitamin is best for you? Well let me try and help you out by explaining what's inside a men's multi-vitamin.

Good quality men's multi-vitamins have been scientifically formulated to provide key nutrients important for maintaining men's health and overall well-being. The multi-vitamin is specifically formulated to support energy production, maintain healthy cognitive function and optimal protein metabolism. The standard multi-vitamin will contain B-vitamins, anti-oxidants, and increasingly medicinal herbs such as St.Mary's Thistle, Globe Artichoke, Damiana, Ginseng and Tribulus. They should also contain minerals such as zinc, magnesium, calcium and boron. Male multi-vitamins are usually free of iron as men generally don't need extra iron.

So what does this all 'Men's multi' stuff mean?

Let me break it down for you:

- B-vitamins support energy production, healthy cognitive function, and assist the liver in detoxification, protein and fat metabolism. They also aid in the normal functioning of the nervous system, muscle tone in the stomach and intestinal tract, and healthy skin, hair and eyes. Folate and B12 help normal blood and cardiovascular functioning. They're pretty impressive those B-vitamins!
- Minerals such as magnesium, calcium, (along with vitamin D) help to form and maintain strong bones. Zinc is beneficial for keeping a healthy immune system, assists in wound healing, and is needed for DNA synthesis, which is beneficial for increasing a low sperm count, fertility, low sex drive and testosterone – pretty essential if you're planning on conceiving. Chromium is an excellent mineral used for controlling your blood sugar levels to help maximise energy production.
- Antioxidants are substances such as vitamin E, C, CoQ10, as well as certain herbs such as Tumeric and Vitis Vinifera (Grape Seed extract). Antioxidants help to prevent cellular oxidation, which leads to a breaking down of cells, premature cellular death and may result in diseases such as cancer!



- Medicinal herbs such as St.Mary's Thistle, Globe Artichoke and Dandelion Root are liver protecting, regenerative and restorative. These are very important in supporting your liver detoxifying toxins such as the ones contained in alcohol, pollution, pesticides, herbicides in food, and cigarettes. Yes, red wine has anti-oxidant effects but your liver still takes a beating from it! Did you know the liver plays an important role in energy production by releasing glycogen when it's needed for energy production, as well as regulating the amount of glucose present in the blood, critical to health (known as blood sugar level)?
- Damiana, Tribulus, Panax, Siberian Ginseng and Saw Palmetto are fantastic herbs specifically for men's health. Damiana, Tribulus, Panax and Siberian Ginseng are fantastic for increasing stamina and energy, helping the body deal with stress hormones. Saw Palmetto has shown to have positive results with men who have benign prostatic hyperplasia (enlarged prostate), reduces unwanted frequent urination, improves urinary outflow, and reduces volume of residual urine.

So do you really need to take one?

Sadly yes! The 21st Century is a tough place to be healthy in many ways. Food we eat today contains fewer nutrients than the food available 20 years ago because:

- Our soils are becoming depleted and lower in nutrient levels
- Foods are often picked before they are ripe and then cold stored
- Many food processing techniques destroy or remove nutrients and cooking methods further destroy nutrients.

This is compounded by the fact that we have an increased need for nutrients due to:

- Pollution levels being higher and wider spread
- Our busy and stressful lifestyles.

When we don't absorb enough vitamins and minerals we're more likely to feel tired. We may struggle to cope with stress and become more susceptible to infection and disease. For these reasons it is worth taking a bit of extra 'health insurance' by taking a multivitamin and mineral supplement everyday. In fact renowned clinicians Robert H. Fletcher and Kathleen M. Fairfield from the Harvard School of Medicine wrote in their comprehensive study 'Vitamins for Chronic Disease Prevention in Adults', that "we recommend the daily use of multivitamin and mineral supplement for all adults."

As with everything however, you tend to get what you pay for. Cheap vitamin formulas tend to contain cheaper ingredients in an imbalanced ratio. While on the surface they may appear easier on the hip pocket, in the long run, they prove quite uneconomical. You may need to take up to four tablets of a cheaper multi to get the same benefits as one of superior quality, and taking a higher number increases your risk of unwelcome side-effects such as niacin (B6) flushing. This happens when niacin causes your capillaries to increase in size. It is this increase in size, partly, which causes your skin to get red. When this happens your body will sometimes release histamine into the blood, which can also cause a slight itching of the skin. This is not harmful to the body but can be annoying. It is always advised to take your multi with food as they can sometimes cause nausea. Luckily most of the vitamins in your multi are water soluble, so if your body can't absorb it, it will be excreted.

Finally, multi-vitamins are very good for every day general support. If a multi-vitamin is not giving you as much of a boost as you need, you may be suffering from a health issue a bit more involved, and it would be a good idea to speak to a healthcare professional.

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