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Changes in Supplement Use

I take dietary supplements, and so do most of the people I know. We're not alone. Using data from the NHANES data in 1999 and 2012, researchers compared how many people used supplements and what type of supplements they used (1).

Close to 38,000 subjects were included in the study. The percentage of people using supplements remained fairly stable over the time span at 52%; what changed was the types of supplements people took. Multivitamin-multimineral (MVMM) dropped 6% from 37% to 31%. There were some increases: vitamin D supplementation (other than from MVMM) increased from 5.1% to 19%. Similarly, fish oil supplements increased from 1.3% to 12% of those who completed the study. Overall the use of other supplements declined.

The results make sense. A number of epidemiological and longitudinal studies using Food Frequency Questionnaires associated calcium intake from MVMM with diseases such as cancer and heart disease. On the other hand, the research on fish oil and vitamin D has been mostly positive. The change in intake seems to mimic the headlines.



The results were interesting but not earth-shattering. However, an opinion article in the same journal called into question the use of supplements in general. I'll cover that on Thursday.

What are you prepared to do today?

Dr. Chet

Reference: JAMA. 2016;316(14):1464-1474. doi:10.1001/jama.2016.14403

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