

Supplement Users Show Pattern of Healthy Habits

Dietary supplement users take these products as just one component of a larger effort to develop a healthier lifestyle, according to a newly published review.

The review, “Health Habits and Other Characteristics of Supplement Users,” published in the *Nutrition Journal* and co-authored by Council for Responsible Nutrition (CRN) Consultant Annette Dickinson, PhD, and CRN’s Senior Vice President of Scientific and Regulatory Affairs Duffy MacKay, ND, examined data from 20 peer-reviewed scientific journal articles and found that, “overall, the evidence suggests that users of dietary supplements are seeking wellness and are consciously adopting a variety of lifestyle habits that they consider to contribute to healthy living.”

The review indicated that Americans who take dietary supplements are focused on wellness for the long term. The results of the review counter concerns that dietary supplement users are operating under a “halo effect” or are somehow short-changing themselves, eating poorly, barely exercising and relying on a supplement alone for good health. The data indicate that, in fact, dietary supplement users make better food choices in addition to taking supplements. A report on the 2003-06 National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys (NHANES) calculated nutrient intakes of dietary supplement users as compared to non-users and found that people who used dietary supplements had somewhat higher intakes of most nutrients from food alone (not counting the nutrients in dietary supplements) than people who were not supplement users.

On the flip side, contrary to assertions that supplement users are eating better already and therefore don’t need the supplements they take, the NHANES data shows many Americans failed to consume the estimated average requirement (EAR) for many nutrients when only naturally occurring nutrients in foods were considered. Enrichment and fortification of foods decreased the prevalence of intakes below the EAR, and the use of dietary supplements further decreased shortfalls.

“It’s important to give dietary supplement users credit for their efforts to improve their overall wellness profile with thoughtful choices,” said Dr. MacKay. “The scientific evidence indicates that they tend to incorporate these products into their lifestyles as part of a broader focus on healthy living, with supplement use just one of a constellation of smart, healthy habits.”

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