

## QUESTION OF THE WEEK



**HEATHER AULD, M.D.**

Physicians' Primary Care of Southwest Florida

### Q: How do I know if I need to take a supplement?

Whole fresh food is the best supplement in the world as our body miraculously deciphers which nutrients to assimilate and which to discard. But even people who eat well may have problems getting full nutritional value from foods that are sitting on the store shelves for weeks.

And some individuals' genetic makeup demands or uses up certain nutrients more quickly.

A good quality multivitamin is a great idea for most people. How do you know if you need more? Unfortunately, blood levels do not reflect a vitamin or mineral deficiency until

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they are depleted. To detect a deficiency, a red blood cell level should be checked. This is costly, not widely available and not practical.

What we do know is that certain medical conditions are associated with depletion of specific minerals. For example, low red blood cell magnesium levels are frequently found in people with epilepsy and migraine headaches. Autistic children may have low cellular levels of zinc and selenium. For almost any condition, there may be an associated decrease in a specific nutrient. Supplementation then might be tried to see if there is any improvement along with standard medical therapy, of course.

Be specific about each supplement. Please do not take super ultra mega vitamins as they may hinder the absorption of another vital nutrient. The best supplement of all is good food.

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— Dr. Heather Auld, fellow at the University of Arizona Department of Integrative Medicine, is an obstetrician/gynecologist with Physicians' Primary Care of Southwest Florida in the Park Royal office, 9021 Park Royal Drive, Fort Myers. Call 432-5858.