

Do Dietitians Take Food Supplements?

Many people that I talk to assume that dietitians do not use or recommend food supplements. However, a recent study (Dickenson et al, Nutrition Journal, doi: 10.1186/1475-2891-11-14, 2012) shows that nothing could be further from the truth.

This study surveyed 300 dietitians whose business involved seeing clients in private practice or at a clinic.

74% of the dietitians surveyed said that they used dietary supplements on a regular basis, and another 22% said that they used dietary supplements on an occasional or seasonal basis.

The most frequently used supplements (used by 40% or more) were **multivitamins, calcium, omega-3/fish oil and vitamin D. Vitamin C, probiotics, B vitamins and fiber supplements** were also used by more than 20% of the dietitians surveyed.

And they didn't just use dietary supplements, they recommended them as well. 97% of the dietitians surveyed recommended supplements to their clients.

The most frequent reasons given by dietitians for recommending supplements were **bone health (70%), filling nutrition gaps (67%), overall health and wellness benefits (49%), lowering cholesterol (46%), heart health (46%), dietary pattern - specifically vegetarian or vegan (43%), digestive health (39%), diabetes or glucose control (27%) and eating disorders (19%).**

In deciding which supplements to recommend the three most trusted sources of information for dietitians were clinical studies in **scientific journals (72%), clinical guidelines from professional organizations (72%) and continuing education conferences (71%).**

It is also important to recognize that most of a dietitian's formal education focuses on foods and design of diets for various clinical conditions. Most dietitians receive relatively little formal education on supplementation.

So it should come as no surprise that 95% of the dietitians surveyed said **that they would like to receive more formal education on supplementation - particularly in the areas of drug-supplement interactions, basics of dietary supplementation (including variation in product quality and how supplements are regulated), how to counsel their clients about dietary supplements, weight management, women's health, men's health and sports nutrition.**

To Your Health!
Dr. Stephen G Chaney