

People often ask me **how much should they spend on supplements?** Nobody wants to spend too much, and when you start comparing prices there is a huge variation.

Some experts claim that all supplements are the same, and you should just buy the cheapest one you can find. But is that the best advice? Let's look at vitamin E supplements as an example.

Consumer labs tested a number of vitamin E supplements a few years ago. Most of them passed their quality tests, which is comforting. But consumer labs went on to compare the cost of the various vitamin E supplements.

They concluded that synthetic vitamin E (d,l-alpha-tocopherol) could be obtained for as little as two cents per 400 IU of vitamin E; natural vitamin E (pure d- alpha-tocopherol) supplements usually cost around eight or nine cents per 400 IU; and if you wanted a full spectrum vitamin E - one that contained delta- tocopherol, gamma- tocopherol, and the tocotrienols - you generally needed to spend about 20-30 cents per 400 IU.

So which one should you choose? The synthetic form of vitamin E is taken up into the bloodstream just as quickly as the natural form. **However, there is a serum protein that binds only to the natural form of vitamin E and keeps it in the bloodstream eight times longer than the synthetic form. So the natural form of vitamin E is probably a better value than the synthetic form.**

But what about the full-spectrum vitamin E's? Are they really worth the additional cost?

There was a fascinating review on tocotrienols in the September 2012 issue of the Townsend Letter. It cited numerous references showing that tocotrienols are much more effective than pure alpha-tocopherol at reducing cancer risk. More importantly, pure alpha-tocopherol by itself actually interferes with the absorption of dietary tocotrienols. So in several of the studies, alpha-tocopherol by itself actually appeared to increase cancer risk.

You've probably seen the headlines that some of those studies generated. The headlines said that vitamin E may increase cancer risk. What those headlines didn't tell you was that those studies were done with pure alpha-tocopherol, not a full-spectrum vitamin E supplement.

So at least in the case of vitamin E, it's pretty clear that the cheapest supplement may not be the best supplement. You really want to be looking for a full- spectrum vitamin E supplement - even if you need to pay a bit more together.

To Your Health!
Dr. Stephen G Chaney