



THE QUESTION OF SUPPLEMENTATION

One question that is frequently asked of naturopathic practitioners is "...if my diet is good enough, why should I have to take this vitamin, mineral or herbal supplement?" The answer is that in an ideal world, there would be no need. However, we do not live in an ideal world. The food that we buy has probably been refined, processed, prepared and packaged in unnecessary ways for the consumer trade. The processes involved may leech out or even destroy some of the available nutrients. For example, canned foods lose 30% of their nutrients in the scalding process, 25% in sterilisation, 27% in liquor diffusion, and 12% in reheating. This leaves only 6% of the original nutritional value remains with canned products. Another example is that frozen foods lose 25% of their nutrients in the scalding process, 19% in freezing, 15% in thawing and 24% in cooking, leaving only 17% nutrient bio-availability.

The pH (acidity/alkalinity) of the soil may also serve to reduce the bio-availability of certain nutrients. These problems, may, to some degree, be eliminated by organic and fresh foodstuffs from a reputable outlet where no chemicals or additives are used in the growth or packaging of the goods. However, this type of purchase can be time-consuming and sadly, more expensive than supermarket merchandise.

It is not just the way food is processed, but the way our bodies process the food we put into them which also has an impact on whether we are deficient in some nutrients and therefore need a course of supplements. Cigarettes, for example, drain vitamin C from the system, while alcohol reduces the availability of the B group, so important in many biochemical systems.

One further point to add is that vitamins and minerals sometimes require the presence of other substances to aid their digestion and assimilation. For example, vitamin C needs the presence of compounds called bio-flavoids. These compounds are called synergists. Good quality supplements have been designed to contain all necessary synergic factors to maximise their potential. This is reassuring in view of the fact that foodstuffs high in vitamin C when fresh might not be as high after being stored for a number of days. Spinach, for example, can lose half of its vitamin C when stored at room temperature for three days; and lettuce can lose a quarter of its vitamins A and C in a few days, even when refrigerated properly.

All of these issues can lead to vitamin/mineral deficiency. For this reason, a Sunflower practitioner may suggest a course of supplements if he/she finds that particular vitamins, etc. are lacking in your diet, and that deficiency is having a detrimental effect on your health. Of course, it is important to remember that the practitioner will review the supplementation after one or two courses to see whether it is still needed. By that time, it is likely that any deficiency you might have had will have been put right. If you make the right adjustments to your diet that will be all that is needed to maintain your health.

EVEN IF YOU EAT A BALANCED DIET, YOU MAY NOT BE MEETING YOUR NUTRITIONAL NEEDS!