

Healthy Eating Vs Dietary Supplements and the Fight against COVID- 19 Pandemic

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The novel coronavirus or COVID 19 has caused many changes in the daily lives of people around the globe since it first started in China in early 2020. This virus has caused a death toll reaching around 1 million. This number was due to its complications which can be attributed to lower immunity. It's been known for a long time that immunity is closely related to nutritional status which can affect the prevalence of infections and their severity. The individuals who follow unhealthy dietary systems are at a greater risk these infections. On the other hand, these infections can cause nutrients deficiencies affecting the individuals' nutritional status. Therefore, people should focus on their diets during the ongoing Corona virus pandemic especially those with underlying diseases which make the situation worse.

Good nutrition is very important before and during infection. When body's temperature arises, the body needs extra energy and nutrients to fight the fever. For this reason, maintaining a healthy diet is very important during this pandemic. Although there is no evidence that foods or dietary supplements can prevent or cure COVID-19 infection, but healthy diets are very essential for the immune functions during this pandemic and the healthy diets can also reduce the possibility of developing and worsening the situation of people with other diseases, such as CVD, diabetes and cancers.

Eating healthy diets during the COVID-19 pandemic is very important and it should put emphasis on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, and nuts, and limited consumption of red and processed meat, refined carbohydrates, and simple sugars. Fish, dairy products, and poultry should be moderately consumed. Whereas good fats should be as olive, canola oil, sesame oil, peanut oil or other oils rich in unsaturated fatty acids. Trans-fats should be totally avoided. This diet will deliver the right quality and quantities

of healthy macronutrients and micronutrients such as CHO, protein, lipids, minerals and vitamins necessary for immune response to fight infections. In order to build a strong immune system which will be able to prevent and cure any infection. Good hydration is also crucial for optimal health.

Dietary surveys show that most people are consuming diets that do not meet national guidelines because of availability or cost. Such diets may not provide optimal quantities of essential vitamins and minerals. Currently, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is likely to put many more individuals at risk of food insecurity and make consuming a healthy diet even more difficult. Nutritional supplements should not be considered as substitutes for a healthy diet, because no supplements contain all the benefits provided by healthy foods. Vulnerable groups which can suffer from nutrient deficiencies and require dietary supplements are, particularly among people with inadequate dietary sources:

1. Elderly people: Older adults are most often deficient in these helpful micronutrients, and thus can derive the greatest benefit from supplementation.
2. Breastfeed babies and young children.
3. Pregnant and nursing women.
4. People with compromised immune system.
5. People with other diseases such as diabetes, CVD, cancers.
6. People who can eat 3 meals a day or their food consumption is limited due chronic or psychological illness.

Although we are not aware of good data on the effects of nutritional supplements on risk or severity of COVID-19, existing evidence indicates that supplements of several nutrients can reduce risk or severity of some viral infections. There have been many studies evaluating the deficiencies of some dietary supplements

and their link to infections. The most used supplements used during Covid-19 pandemic are discussed below.

Vitamin D: Clinical trials included both the seasonal and pandemic flu caused by H1N1 virus in 2009 have shown that vitamin D supplementation lowers the likelihoods of developing acute viral respiratory tract infections. A daily dose of vitamin D greater than 1000 IU improved the symptoms of those who were infected and their recovery was faster. Taking supplemental vitamin D would be reasonable for most people to consider. People with darker skin may need more vitamin D; up to 4000 IU per day is considered safe.

Vitamin C: The effectiveness of vitamin C has been studied worldwide and shown that vitamin C acts as an antioxidant, preventing inflammation and tissue damage associated with immune responses. The dose of vitamin C varied from 1 - 3 g/day, and dose does not appear to be the main driver of effectiveness. Doses of vitamin C above 2 g/day should be avoided outside of medical care.

Zinc: Many studies have conducted have shown that zinc deficiency can decrease the individual's ability to fight infections. The recommended dose of zinc in these studies ranged from 20 mg/week to 92 mg/day.

Conclusion

It's recommended that macro and micronutrients should be secured from healthy foods in the first place. With regard to supplements, supplements promoting wild health claims must be avoided.

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