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Supplementing Chiropractic with Nutrition

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by Dana Hinesly

Proper supplements ensure patients get what they need.



Americans don't eat enough fruits and vegetables. According to a 2007 study conducted by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, not only are most adults not eating enough of the fresh stuff to satisfy regulations set by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)—that is, two daily servings of fruit and three of vegetables—but there is no indication they plan on doing it anytime soon.

The report found only 11% of adults met the guidelines during the 1999 to 2002 study period, and among them approximately 62% did not consume any whole fruit servings. And that number was down when compared to the previous data set acquired between 1988 and 1994.

Promoting Proper Nutrition

Such news is no revelation to chiropractors who choose to incorporate the use of nutritional supplementation into their overall treatment plan.

"My personal philosophy is you cannot be healthy without supplements. I do not believe we have the ability to get all of our nutritional needs met by simply eating a whole food, organic, well-balanced diet," says David Dahlman, DC, of the Hyde Park Holistic Center, Cincinnati. This is due in large part to the lack of control Americans have over much of the food they eat. "There are too many variables associated with our food chain: fields are devoid of topsoil able to provide nutrition, and we don't know whether or not the produce was picked ripe, too ripe, or not ripe enough, for example."

Other factors include temperature variations during shipping, along with transit time between the fields and the warehouses and the warehouses and the stores.

"Could a person possibly not need any supplementation and eat a diet that might be raw, or from their own garden, and be healthy? Maybe, but I haven't met that person yet," he says.

Another believer in supplementation—Jacalyn Buettner, DC, of Union Square Chiropractic (San Francisco)—sees firsthand the lack of nutrition in many clients.

"Most Americans don't get the nutrients they need to live a healthy life," she says, adding that not only are they not eating adequate amounts of fresh produce, even fewer people get enough fiber and whole grains, as well as healthy, fatty fish in their diet. "If people did eat well, they probably wouldn't need the supplementation. But most people don't."

She continues, "There have been a number of studies that show nutrition plays a role in health, in healing, even in your memory. So as a practitioner, I feel it is important that my patients get good nutrition in order to feel more natural energy and to support their bodies in the healing process."

A lack of balanced nutrition manifests itself throughout the body, presenting through a number of ailments and conditions that run the gamut from inflammation to "brain fog." Proper supplementation can often help with more complicated issues.

"I had one patient who was having weird pain and digestive issues, to the point where they finally took her appendix out," says G. Douglas Andersen, DC, DACBSP, CCN, of Brea, Calif. After interviewing the patient and studying her history, he deduced the symptoms were being generated by her gallbladder. "I gave her a bottle of digestive supplements designed for people with gallbladder issues, and now she thinks I walk on water. One simple bottle of pills and her problems were over."

Such dramatic and immediate results are something Dahlman is also very familiar with. The bulk of his practice consists of gastrointestinal patients, including those struggling with irritable bowel syndrome, Crohn's disease, and colitis.

"Many, many years ago, I realized that a healthy gastrointestinal system is extremely important, not only for human health, but as being potentially responsible for a lack of health," he says.

Choosing the Right Product

Which supplements are best? It depends on who you talk with, though there is a clear preference for products backed by research.

"It is really designed for almost 99% of the population, and as a practitioner I want to spend the majority of my time adjusting, so it's perfect," Buettner says of the Vi-PAK from ViSalus Sciences she recommends to clients. "It gives them what they need, and because of the science and research behind it, I feel confident my patients are getting the best nutrition possible."

In addition to study-based backing, she says positive experiences also play into the equation.

"I don't do any type of hard sell. I recommend it to patients, and the majority of them will come back the next month and they feel the benefit, so they want to stay on it," she says.

Dahlman also prefers to stick with a single brand. For more than 15 years he has been helping patients through the use of products from Metagenics, San Clemente, Calif, and Gig Harbor, Wash.

"Once I tried them with patients, I never looked back, because these supplements just flat-out work," he says. "With the broad range of supplements and the high quality they offer, these supplements help my patients reach the goals I have for them."

Still other chiropractors choose to work with a variety of manufacturers.

"I have absolutely zero brand loyalty," says Andersen, whose shelves also include supplements from Metagenics, as well as Anabolic; Thorne Research, Sandpoint, Idaho; Dee Cee Laboratories, White House, Tenn; and Progressive Laboratories, Irving, Tex, among others. "Because I know nutrition, I can look through the product catalogs and see how they've put them together. Some of the formulations are just bizarre and were obviously not done by a scientist, let alone a physician or someone who knows nutrition."

After determining a product's quality, he also factors in the final cost to his patients.

"If I can give someone something that is just as good for less money, that's what I'll choose," he says. "Compliance is an issue, so the fewer obstacles I present to patients, the better the chance I have of them complying."

Aside from brand, another consideration is the difference between natural and synthetic supplements, a central difference between the two being the amount absorbed and utilized within the body.

"As much as possible, I want to use natural supplements, but it does depend on what we're talking about. It is just not feasible to create a multivitamin, for example, from all-natural substances because the pill would be the size of a watermelon," Dahlman says. "So you do the best you can, and as a practitioner, I want to pick companies that have their eye on using all-natural, raw materials as much as they possibly can, minimizing the use of anything synthetic."

Andersen adds that in some cases, synthetic forms are preferable.

"For something like a B vitamin, you may have a patient who has a chemical sensitivity, so you want them on something that does not have even a speck of yeast or milk or dairy in it," he says, noting that even "all-natural" supplements have been processed in some way. "There is nothing natural about taking a huge salad and putting it into a capsule. Ideally, we would like to generate most of our nutrients from food, but it isn't always possible."

The Liquidity of Supplements

Including as many essential nutrients possible in one supplement can be a daunting challenge for pills or tablets, but not necessarily for liquids. Liquid supplements, such as those from Drucker Laboratories, Plano, Tex, can deliver better assimilation than tablets, and pack a punch because they are more suited for the combination of several different nutrients.

They are much more readily broken down and absorbed, with as much as 85% to 90% of nutrients absorbed in 22 to 33 seconds,¹ compared with the hours it can take for the nutrients in a pill to be absorbed by the body.²

There is also an advantage in that liquids are easy to swallow, which is particularly appealing for the elderly, young children, and people who simply do not like to swallow pills. However, liquids are not perfect in that they often have a shorter shelf life than pills, but there are some that are more stable and can hold their potency for years if combined and processed properly.²

Treating with Supplements

Nutrition seems to complement the hands-on, total-person approach to care that is chiropractic.

"I feel that by using supplements, they help me to create even a stronger relationship with my patients. We don't just talk about treatment, we talk about preventing illness and injury, and how I can help them have better health," Buettner says. "I use supplementation as an additional wellness tool to help people achieve greater levels of health and wellness."

She notes that nutrition has always been a component of her personal life and, subsequently, her chiropractic practice. She works with each patient to increase their vitality and improve their symptomatology.

For Dahlman, whose book, *Why Doesn't My Doctor Know This?*, details how to treat digestive issues with dietary advice and an all-natural supplement program, the ultimate goal has always been to treat them through nutritional therapies.

"My intention, from the beginning, was to open up a holistic center to help people with chronic health conditions," he says. He starts the majority of his patients on a foundational program of supplements, running lab tests on many, including Crohn's disease and colitis patients. "I do not believe you can get over Crohn's and colitis without learning your food allergies, which we do through bloodwork."

Based on the test results, he will fine-tune the patient's diet, eliminating all foods contributing to the inflammatory process.

Andersen offers nutrition services to clients who express an interest. For those individuals, he schedules a session dedicated solely to learning what their current lifestyle is like and determining what suggestions he can make to help them improve their health.

During the initial 1- to 2-hour consultation, he requests that they bring every supplement they own, from vitamins and minerals to herbs and protein.

"By examining what they are taking, I can find out if they're getting the proper dosage or not," he says. It also provides an opportunity to coach patients on the proper storage of supplements—avoiding spots that are too hot or damp. Beyond that, however, "I want to see what is at their house, because they may have good things they can take, which means I don't need to sell them anything. So, again, you are saving them money—and increasing compliance."

Know Your History

The common denominator with Dahlman, Andersen, and Buettner is the belief that to adequately advise anyone about nutrition, an extensive knowledge of that individual's habits is vital.

"I do an in-depth history. I sit down and ask patients everything about their pain—and every time they answer my question, it is going to spur a few more; and then I ask about their diet," Andersen says.

An added benefit to the extensive background is its ability to help doctors screen out those who should not be consuming supplements

"For the most part, pregnant or lactating women, or those individuals on blood-thinning medications, need to use supplements with caution," Buettner says. "I always recommend they speak with their physician prior to using a supplement to be sure that it doesn't interfere with their medications or so it doesn't have any potential negative concentration for the child."

The FDA adds to her list, advocating consultations with a doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for anyone with diabetes, high blood

pressure, or other health problems, as well as those having surgery.

Oftentimes, critical information can only be unearthed through an open dialogue with the patient.

"You have got to sit there and cross-examine the person to find out where, on average, they are getting most of their calories," Andersen says. "You can't give someone a supplement unless you know what they are eating and what they are not eating—and you can't find that out with a quick questionnaire or computer survey."

Complement this article by reading the [March 2008 cover story](#).

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References

1. *Physician's Desk Reference*. 49 ed. Montvale, NJ: Medical Economics Co; 1995:1542.
2. Drucker R, Roth M. Liquids vs pills. Plano, Tex: Drucker Labs.

Growing Well-Adjusted Children

By Julie Duck

Why chiropractic and nutrition are so important for our kids

Obesity. Type 2 diabetes. Back pain. No longer are these the health problems of adults. Today, children are presenting with more health concerns than ever before, and for the first time in 2 centuries, the current generation of children in America may have shorter life expectancies than their parents.¹ It is imperative that parents and health care providers do all that they can to ensure not only a healthy future for children, but a happy one as well.

Christine Anderson, DC, DICCP, DiHom, is one such health care provider who is active in ensuring the health and well-being of children. Since 1989, she has specialized in pediatric chiropractics, a discipline that requires an understanding of the unique physical and mental attributes of children. From her practice, Kid Chiropractic Family Wellness Center, Los Angeles, Anderson sees a variety of young patients who benefit from her pediatric knowledge and nutritional recommendations.

Anderson, a graduate of Cleveland Chiropractic College-Los Angeles, completed a 3-year postgraduate program that gives her diplomate status, as well as achieved Board Certification in Chiropractic Pediatrics and Pregnancy (DICCP). She also holds a diploma in homeopathy (DiHom) from the British Institute of Homeopathy.

"Children need a different evaluation," says Anderson, who looks at the development of her patients' spines, as well as their nervous systems, to ensure there is free expression (to allow the child to develop properly). Developmental milestones are also checked. Anderson notes that children have few similarities to their adult counterparts when it comes to chiropractic care. For example, they have more cartilage than bone, and are in a state of rapid development. Anderson notes that the first year of life is crucial for spinal development, because the spine actually grows 50% at this time; children also have to develop the secondary curves of the neck and lower back, not to mention their brain development is 60% of adult capacity. In essence, the young chiropractic patient is very unique indeed.

The Start of Subluxation

According to Anderson, a fetus in utero can experience trauma to the spine because of its positioning. Additionally, the mother's emotions and use of drugs during labor can lead to physical, emotional, and toxic stress in the baby. This is when subluxation begins, and if not addressed early in the child's life, it becomes exacerbated as the child grows, walks, runs, falls, and experiences the milestones of rapid development. Fortunately, subluxation issues can be halted with pediatric chiropractic treatment and a healthy, nutritious diet.

Nutrition as the Key to Healthy Children

You are what you eat, and nowhere is this more true than with children. Kids are presenting with more diet- and nutrition-related health problems than ever before, with the biggest concern being obesity and its relationship with the development of Type 2 diabetes. Anderson is planning to address this issue at the upcoming International Chiropractic Pediatric Association conference in December 2008.

"In Los Angeles, people who find me are usually more aware of mind-health-nutrition," says Anderson, who considers nutrition her pet love. Anderson, who is the mother of three children, enjoys a vegan diet and provides her family with nutritious, home-cooked meals. Anderson says that parents have to be clever about incorporating vegetables and other nutritious foods into their children's meals, and is currently writing a cookbook that will help parents achieve this.

"I've added shredded zucchini to their [her children's] pancakes," says Anderson, who also hides flax oil in the oatmeal.

The benefits of good diet are evident with her children, as well as the children of her colleagues who also focus on nutrition. Anderson notes that the children hardly ever come down with something, and when they show the first signs of a cold, it only takes a gentle adjustment, a little rest, and some good cooking to make illness stop in its tracks.

Building a Shield Against Illness

A healthy diet is one of the easiest and most beneficial ways to provide children with a shield against illness, including colds and flu. In addition to a good diet, nutritional supplementation also plays an important role in building this shield. Anderson uses a variety of supplements in her practice, and particularly advocates the use of essential fatty acids (EFAs) for children, particularly DHA (docosahexaenoic acid), which is known to help babies and children with the growth of their brains. Typically, DHA is delivered via fish oil capsules, but because fish can harbor pollutants such as PCB, dioxins, and heavy metals in their fat stores, Anderson recommends an algae-based EFA supplement instead. Algae is typically what many fish eat to make DHA in their bodies, and most humans can produce sufficient DHA from short-chain omega-3 fatty acids received from walnuts, flax seeds, and green vegetables.

"Very few companies offer an algae-based DHA. There are two vegan brands that I use ... Omega Zen-3 from NuTru, which uses a veggie cap instead of gelatin ... and Neuro-Mins from Pure Encapsulations. They both come in a gel cap that is easy for children to swallow, or to puncture and swallow," Anderson says.

Flax is also a good source of Omega 3, but as Anderson notes, its conversion to DHA is not perfect, so children need to consume both flax and DHA. Anderson is fond of flax products from Integrative Therapeutics, and adds them to her children's breakfast oatmeal.

Other products that Anderson recommends for her patients are pumpkin seed butter and oil from Omega Nutrition. She says, "It's very tasty, and the kids will like it."

Of course, children should ideally have a balance of good diet and natural supplementation, as well as chiropractic care, to give them what they need to grow healthy and strong. Anderson points out that kids, when they consume junky foods, do not function as well as they could.

"What the body will put up with is amazing ... mega colon, enlarged hearts. People think they feel fine until the moment they have a heart attack, or are diagnosed with cancer or diabetes. It is not all of a sudden ... it's a lifetime. As kids become more obese, they become the first generation whose life expectancy will be less than their parents," Anderson says.

Reference

1. Olshansky SJ, Passaro DJ, Hershow RC, et al. A potential decline in life expectancy in the United States in the 21st century. 2005;352:1138-45.

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