

Need Vitamins? Not really

By ACSH Staff — April 14, 2011

The CDC [reports](#) [1] that the rate of supplement use — including multivitamins — hovered around 40 percent of the U.S. adult population between 2003 and 2008. The latest results suggest that most vitamin and supplement users are educated and maintain a healthy diet. Unlike many of the prior surveys, though, the most recent ones, which have included more than 2,000 participants each year, asked respondents why they take the vitamins.

"It's almost like the people who are taking them aren't the people who need them," said Regan Bailey, a nutritional epidemiologist with the National Institutes of Health.

Precisely, says ACSH's Dr. Elizabeth Whelan, who believes most of the supplement users already acquire enough nutrients from fortified foods. "These results are in line with the general view that with few exceptions — such as women of childbearing age taking B vitamins, especially folate, and calcium and vitamin D for older women at risk of osteoporosis — vitamin supplements simply aren't necessary. The problem is that these people are supplementing their diets with all of these vitamins, but not getting any of the benefits. Further, the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E and K can be toxic at high doses."

ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross adds, "I would say the number of adults in our country who need supplemental multivitamins is exceedingly low. Those who are pregnant, malnourished or chronically ill, though, are more likely to benefit from them." He adds that supplements — including multivitamins — are not regulated by the FDA, and instances of contaminated or sub-standard supplements are not uncommon.

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