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Vitamins May Do More Harm Than Good

A recent study proves that vitamin supplements may not be good news for the human body

Vitamins are an integral part of our daily lives. Whether we're talking about reading about them, hearing other people talk about them, talking about them ourselves or actually ingesting them, we're all used to remarks such as „oh, come on, finish that orange, it's got so many vitamins" or „no, I'm not buying that, it hasn't got enough vitamins". We also know basic things about some of the most commonly mentioned and used vitamins, such as vitamin A, C, D, and K, and are keen to take various vitamin supplements in the hope that they will help us stay healthy and fight off disease more easily. Under these circumstances, it's even more shocking to imagine that this whole philosophy of taking impressive amounts of synthetic vitamins and various other supplements to boost our immune systems, feel better, faster and stronger may turn out to be entirely pointless. The Cochrane Collaboration just published the biggest analysis of its type into this particular field and analyzed the impact vitamins and food supplements have on a number of 233,000 sick and healthy people. The study concluded that there was no firm evidence to support the long-cherished theory that a high vitamin intake would lower the risk of dying prematurely. It would also seem that some of the most fashionable antioxidants nowadays may shorten rather than prolong life. The studies specifically analyzed some of the much-hyped antioxidants (the compounds used by the body to neutralize free radicals, which are believed to cause cell damage and speed up the aging process): beta-carotene, vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin E and selenium, and compared the effects (if any) they had on people who took such supplements with the effects registered on people taking placebo medication. "We found no evidence to support taking antioxidant supplements to reduce the risk of dying earlier in healthy people or patients with various diseases", states Goran Bjelakovic, the researcher in charge of the study. "If anything, the findings of our review show that people in trial groups who were given the antioxidants beta-carotene, vitamin A and vitamin E had increased rates of mortality". Furthermore, high levels of antioxidants were proved to disrupt the absorption of other nutrients that the body effectively needs to function properly. Until further studies will analyze this matter, one thing is certain: if you decide to keep taking vitamins on a regular basis, at least don't overdo it.