

Episode 18 - Your questions answered - supplements

MERYL: hello everyone. And welcome back to the Rebel Nutritionist podcast. Today. I actually literally dragged in my door, Jill Altar, to have a discussion about supplements, which is a follow-up to the podcast with Richard Bloomer from last week.

And I dragged Jill in because this was actually supposed to be a podcast, me talking to you guys on my own. And talking about supplements, but then we got to talking in the office about some of the questions that we've gotten from you guys from our listeners and weeding through them. And I really feel like this is more of a conversation that is better as a dialogue. And Jill is literally my right hand here at the Brandwein Institute for nutrition and wellness.

And she's also studying for her certification to become a health coach here. So what better way than a trial by fire to get her in reluctantly as it were. But thank you for joining me, Jill.

Jill: You're very welcome. You're very welcome.

MERYL: So we're going to start this discussion. We've gotten some great questions from our listeners and from our clients and from just questions over on the internet about supplementation.

And we could probably sit here for hours answering them, but we've chosen a few to really talk about today and focus on. And then of course, as always. If you have questions for us, please submit them and we will absolutely get back to you, but hoping to at least get through some of the things that people want to know about.

So I guess we should just get started.

Choosing the Right Supplements

JILL: Okay. Okay.

Well I think the biggest question everybody has is **how do I know what's right for me? How do I know what supplements I should be taking to feel better?**

MERYL: Right. And that is a great question. And we get that all day long. So , the best way that I can answer that is that we do **specific nutrient testing**.

And truly that is the be all end, all in terms of really knowing what's right for you, right?

You test your blood, you look at your own biochemistry and you see where the deficiencies are because otherwise I always say it's like, I'm taking a dart, throwing it at a dartboard and going, oh yes, maybe you need vitamin B.

Maybe you need this. Maybe you need that. But without really testing and knowing.

Where those deficiencies are. It's impossible to know and people say, well, you can go by symptoms. But the problem is, if you're fatigued, which is usually the biggest symptom, right? Wouldn't you say, oh, I'm tired. Fatigue can take on many forms.

And so it's not always a nutrient deficiency. And If you're fatigued, could it be lack of sleep? Could it be a lack of iron? Could it be the lack of a B-vitamin right? We are just guessing. So I always say **it's better to test and not guess**, but if I'm really going to be fair and answer that, because I don't expect everybody to walk in the door and test because not everybody can, I always call **my best nutrition insurance policy are a few supplements**.

So vitamin D is for sure on the top of the list in terms of what to take, because most people, the majority, I think I've met one or two people in all the hundreds and thousands of people that we have tested that have ever really had normal vitamin D. So vitamin D. Is a really, really important nutrient.

Every single cell in the body needs vitamin D. It is a prohormone it's used for hormones it's used for everything that our body needs to function. So immune system, heart health, brain health, all of it. Well, what's the question? How much is the dose? Our vitamin D levels should be somewhere between 60 and 80.

Most people could probably take a supplement of vitamin D three. It needs to be D three at 5,000 international units per day. And that should be sufficient. If there's a 1000, if there's a 2000 IUs, Those are going to be less effective. In my opinion, I think most people should be taking 5,000 IUs, and it is a simple blood test.

When you get your blood work done at your doctor's office, you can certainly ask for a vitamin D level there's different forms of vitamin D. Yeah, that's the other thing when we measure it there's and without getting too much into biochemistry, but you need to know, is it the 125 hydroxy? Is it just regular 25 hydroxy , and one that goes into the cell more than the other.

So we can get very intricate in understanding vitamins, but I think for the most part, without getting too technical and too weedy into the science 5,000 IUs of a good vitamin D three is what I would suggest is one of the supplements that we would want to take. The other thing is a good whole food multivitamin.

And the reason I call it a whole food based multi is because it's made out of real food as opposed to some of the synthetic ones where they might not be absorbed so well. And again, vitamins get to be a touchy subject. **Because there are so many vitamin companies out there and it becomes confusing.**

How do you know which one to choose? And this is why I am so particular, with what I recommend and what I suggest, because I can't just say across the board, every single multivitamin is made equal because we know it's not but a whole food based multi, certainly you have a better shot at your body.

Being able to absorb it, getting most of the B vitamins that you need, getting your vitamin A vitamin C or vitamin E or vitamin D. Right? The, what we call the major vitamins. And then. And then your minerals in the right balance. So most multivitamins give you the bare minimum. They're not usually enough to correct nutritional deficiencies.

And so. People think, oh, well, I'm taking a multi and I'm getting everything I need and that's not always the case. So we've got to be careful about that. We've gotta be careful about extra ingredients in those things. And so it becomes really, really confusing. And

this is why I always recommend reaching out to a nutrition professional who knows how to read between the lines on these supplements, but a whole food based multi is.

Something that I would recommend. And then, so your vitamin D, a good fish oil that has your EPA and your DHA. And you want to make sure that it is a fish oil that has been certified. So we **look at companies that have certifications**, like GMP certifications so that we know they have used good manufacturing processes and that the ingredients don't have things like mercury and so forth because we know fish oil is notorious for that.

So official, yeah. And then magnesium is always a good one. You want to try and look for not necessarily magnesium citrate, that's the kind of magnesium that's going to make you go to the bathroom. So if you need to go to the bathroom, magnesium citrate is a good option. I would look for a magnesium glycinate or magnesium QA, because those are the ones that are absorbed better through the blood-brain barrier.

And they're more effective in getting into the bloodstream and then optional things like Calcium. I'm not a big proponent of calcium, but I get asked about it all the time. So that may be an optional one. And I know Jill, you had some thoughts on some of the other foundational ones.

JILL: Well, I know a lot of people are taking zinc right now.

It's been said that it is a foundational supplement. What are your thoughts on that?

Why it's important to consider the amounts of supplements you are taking

MERYL: So, absolutely because when we talk about the vitamins, so we're talking about your primary vitamin, vitamin A, D, E, K, vitamin C. Those are your antioxidants, your fat soluble vitamins. And then of course your B vitamins, right?

Let's call them the most common that we see. And then of course, there's your minerals, right? Calcium, magnesium, manganese, zinc, copper. And so iron is in there as well.

Understand that everything in the body works synergistically. And so absorption is dependent on those ratios, calcium and magnesium and zinc.

They all are dependent on each other. So if we take too much zinc, we may end up with too little copper, right. They're going to compete for absorption in the body. This is another pet peeve of mine. **Most people think if a little is good, more is better. And that is certainly not the case with nutrients.**

And this is what I see all the time. People are just overdosing on nutrients because we have this idea that little is good, more is better. And the issue with zinc is that we don't want to be taking 50 milligrams of zinc, every single. Even for some people 20 to 25 is too much. And so if you're out there trying to boost your immune system, because you've heard zinc is really important for the immune system and you want to fight the virus, then you need to be overdosing on zinc and nothing could be farther from the truth.

So yes, zinc is an essential nutrient and it is a foundational nutrient, but it is important to take it. Synergistically with the other nutrients. And that's what people really need to hear is that **you don't want to overdose on any one of these supplements because here's the thing supplements at high levels actually become drugs and you don't want to be taking drugs because they can cause problems in the body without really monitoring it.** So hope that answers that question.

Why are supplements not FDA regulated?

JILL: It does. It does. But another good question on that same line is why are supplements not FDA regulated.

MERYL: Right? So that's a great question. And this is where people become a little leery and as they should be. And again, another reason why you should be talking to a professional and why are they not regulated?

Because **supplements are really food**, right? It's food stuff, it's nutraceuticals. And so you can't regulate those things. And this is why. The FDA can't get in there. I mean, they **can go in and monitor the facilities** and make sure that the facilities are clean and so forth. And they only go in and monitor if there's a reported problem, but, these are not drugs. Right. So they cannot go in and regulate them. And that's not part of what their jurisdiction is. And so it becomes a tenuous area. I could go into my basement, slap a label on the bottle of something and call it a vitamin. And this is where it becomes very, very scary because unless you know what you're taking and unless the raw materials of where they come from, this is another really, really important point.

Any supplement that I sell is verified. I can verify the ingredients. I can verify the raw materials. I know the manufacturing facility that has come out of, I know that the ingredients have been quarantined for not just efficacy, that, what is said, that's on the label that is actually in the bottle because it's checked, but the raw materials that they are of, of a certain quality and a certain standard and most companies.

Are not really looking at that. If you are not working with a professional who is selling quality supplements, you cannot always verify that what is on the label is actually in the supplement. Regulation is, it's good that it's not regulated because people like me can sell it, but it's bad.

Because then anybody can sell it. And so it is that dicey area of question. But when people come into me and say, oh, well my mother's brothers, cousins, friends said, I should take this. And I'm thinking to myself, well, I don't know. Would you trust financial advice from your mother's brother's friend's cousin, right, but we do.

We just feel like. Okay. Well, if it worked for someone else, it's going to work for me. And that is not the case by any stretch of the imagination. And so you, you just want to always know that, whatever I want to know, look, if what I'm, **I want to know what I'm putting into my body at the end of the day.**

The risks of supplements interacting with medications

JILL: Okay. And with that, there's concern about taking supplements. And having contra-indications with certain medications.

MERYL: Yes, absolutely. Yeah. Again, if you're taking supplements and you're taking above the recommended dosage, sometimes those act as drugs themselves, but let's say you're taking a supplement at the recommended dose. And you're on certain medications. There can be interactions because if you're not paying attention to what ingredients specifically are in your supplements. So now the big, big pull is that everybody is mixing and matching ingredients and supplements, right? So I had someone ask me today about a probiotic, but in the probiotic, there were some herbs and there were some enzymes and there were some vitamins and there were some other things that could potentially impact blood pressure medication could impact the cardiovascular medication. So if you're not looking at the label, understanding what those ingredients do, it is no different than not reading ingredients. When you're buying a food product, right? If you're buying a product off the shelf and you can't pronounce those ingredients, **I always say, if you can't pronounce it, your body doesn't know what to do with it.**

It's not that dissimilar with nutritional supplements. If you don't understand what an ingredient is, don't just assume it's okay for you. **You want to make sure you know what those ingredients are for and what they're doing in your body and not just blindly take something** because someone made a recommendation because they thought it was good for them.

So we have to be very careful about that because there are many medications and not even just cardiovascular and blood pressure, the antidepressants. Anti-depressants and anti-anxieties, there's a ton of supplements that are contraindicated at certain levels. So again, unless you know what you are taking and the doses that you're taking it in, it can certainly complicate a situation.

Why liquid vitamins are better

JILL: Okay. For so many years, I've been told that liquid vitamins are better than the pill form. But not until I met you did I really understand why. So can you explain why lyposomal vitamins are good?

MERYL: So there's a difference between, and that's a great point, **a difference between liquid vitamins and lyposomal delivery** and not everybody's lyposomal delivery is the same.

And what does that even mean? so liquid means it's just the vitamin in liquid. Right. Lyposomal and everybody's technologies are slightly different, but the ones that we use, **the lyposomal technology puts the ingredients in these nano, these tiny particles that have been proven and tested to be absorbed much better** than let's say a liquid, or even in some cases, a pill. Why is this important? Well, because what we know is that, and I see this and we see this all day long people who come in with digestive issues or gut issues, right. That they can't digest and they can't absorb well. Need a different delivery format because the vitamins, if you have a gut issue and you can't digest and absorb, then you're not going to be getting your nutrients.

So nanotechnology and lyposomal technology are a great delivery method that allows for quicker and faster absorption. But again, not all lyposomal technology is the same. So you have to know the company that is providing this. It doesn't mean you go out and buy XYZ lyposomal because it is a better absorbed form unless we know who is manufacturing, that anybody can put something in a spray bottle and call it lyposomal. Right because it's not regulated. So this is where, this fine line of regulation becomes tenuous, but lyposomal delivery is a great way to also if people have liver issues or things like that, detoxification issues, it bypasses that what we call first detox pathway. So it gets absorbed pretty quickly and it is very, very effective.

Does that answer that question?

Are Protein Powders useful for most people?

JILL: You always do seem to answer it. Okay. So talk to me about protein powders. A lot of my friends when they've gone out and they've gone on vacation and they eat too much, they come back and they, they want to quote unquote detox. So they use their protein powders as a meal replacement.

What are your thoughts on that?

MERYL: So we all know, oh, I love my protein powders. One of my first meals of the day generally started with the protein powder. And for me, it's a great way to get everything in my shake at once. That being said, very much like vitamins, not all powders are created equal and unless the protein is being manufactured and, for those people listening out there.

Just so you know, this is another case of **just because there's more in it doesn't mean it's better**. Firstly, **your body can only absorb about 17 grams of protein per sitting**, per time that you eat. Right? So people who are like looking at these protein powders, when there's 25 and 40 grams of protein, I guarantee you, you're not getting that much absorbable.

What we call bioavailable protein. Don't be misled by false marketing that more is better on the protein. **You really don't need more than probably 15 to 21 grams of protein per serving on that**. The other thing about protein powders is again, knowing where the manufacturing is coming from.

And is it an organic protein powder because. Pea proteins, rice proteins can be contaminated with things like arsenic. So we have to be really careful about that and know if you're getting a protein powder that has vitamins in it, and minerals in it versus just a straight protein powder, because that will affect the price.

People often come in and say, oh, well, your protein powders are expensive. Well, our protein powders are not always protein. They're medical foods, which is a whole nother area of conversation, right. A medical food powder is designed to be just that

therapeutic dose of certain nutrients. So we give people medical food powders for their digestive system for their blood sugar dysregulation for their immune systems.

So there's a big difference between medical foods and just a protein powder. And again, like I said, not all protein powders are made equal, but **I do think that the protein powders serve as a great adjunct for someone who is trying to do a meal replacement.** Especially if you add other things that are nutritionally supportive to a protein powder, right?

You add your chia or your flax, we make smoothies all the time here and we add different things and provide that. So Protein powder is very much like everything else. **It's knowing what is inside the bottle, knowing where it's coming from and knowing where the raw materials and ingredients are coming from,** I think are really the most important thing.

So just buying a protein powder. Off the shelf at let's just say, and I'm not dissing Costco or GNC or any of these places, but I don't know. Can you really verify what is in there? Not always. And that is my concern, because you just don't know what's in there.

JILL: But when you're saying that you take a protein powder and you do that one time a day for one of your meals, You're not saying that it's okay to do that for all of your meals and then take supplements to supplement the other ingredients and nutrients that you're not getting through food.

MERYL: Right? I always say. **You can't supplement away a bad diet.** This is again, another thing, something that I see all the time is people coming in with bags full of supplements and their diets are completely processed and devoid of all kinds of nutrients. You just can't, your body will never be able to assimilate nutrients from a pill. Like it will from a food. And we use the example of a carrot. Jill loves this analogy, but I think it really does bring the point home. So you eat a carrot. Your body knows what to do with the vitamin A and the vitamin C and all of the antioxidants, right? You swallow that carrot and your body knows what to do with the fiber.

It works synergistically with everything else in the body. And then all of a sudden you go and take a pill of vitamin A beta carotene, whatever it is. Now you swallow that pill and your body's like, wait a minute. Where's the rest of my carrot? I don't know what to do with just this vitamin A by itself, because vitamin A by itself doesn't work as well as the whole carrot does.

And **your body always will recognize food way better than it ever will a pill**. And so we want to make sure that the food we're eating supports ours. Nutritional goals. And so eating brightly colored fruits and vegetables, eating fruits and vegetables in season, that is so important because seasonal foods have different nutritional components and have different active ingredients in the body. And so **it's really important that we eat according to the seasons**. Right. And I'm getting totally off topic on that, but it is important to get your nutrition through food and you use supplements to fill in the gaps. You don't use supplements as a way to compensate for the poor diet that you're eating. So if you're eating fast food and you're eating food that comes out of a box out of a package, most of the time, you can supplement all you want. You're still not going to be in optimal health.

Preferred brands and personalized nutrients

JILL: People are always asking me, can you ask Meryl what she thinks about this? Can you ask Meryl what she thinks about that? So a lot of people have asked what supplement brands do you like the most and what are your thoughts on personalized nutrients?

MERYL: So **the brands that I use are all professional brands**.

What does that mean? That means **they will only sell their supplements to a licensed healthcare professional**. Why? Because we have been educated and, and instructed on.

What is in the supplement, how to best prescribe it to someone and that they know that their supplements are being distributed by qualified practitioners.

And that I know that they have been tested for quality and purity. Right? So some of the companies that I use, Xymogen, Designs for Health, Pure Encapsulations, Thorn, Orthomolecular. There are some really, really awesome companies that are doing the work that are doing their due diligence in the testing and how they manufacture.

And, and here's the thing. I **know that if I recommend a supplement from one of these companies that it is going to do, what it is intended to do.** when people come to me all the time? Oh, well, I found this supplement, or I found that supplement. There's so many out there. That I can verify that that supplement is going to do what I know the supplements that I'm recommending do.

And people often say, well you sell supplements and what's in it for you and hey, we hear about that all the time. So first, these are not boutique supplements, right? And if anything, I **get better deals from the manufacturers because I buy in quantity and I pass those discounts onto my customers and onto our clients.**

So I'm not like marking these up and making a bazillion dollars in supplements. I will tell you the people that are selling on Amazon and the people that are selling on all of these websites are making way more than I'm making on any supplement. So I sell it as a service to my clients, because I know that what I recommend will work ultimately and that if you're just going to throw a supplement at me.

Oh, okay, well, I'm taking this. So I'm taking that. I don't know. I don't know where it was manufactured. I don't know. It doesn't mean that there's not other supplements that are not as good, but I could literally spend all day every day looking at supplements.

Because that's how many different companies there are out there.

So it's just impossible to keep up. And I know that, the partners that I have been using, that it works. And so onto the next conversation or the next topic, which is.

Personalized nutrients. Right. And this is one thing that I specialize in and we see such tremendous results in our clients who are taking these supplements that are individualized.

So it's very much like the testing that we do, right. We do now. Nutritional genomics. We can get your genetics and understand where the imbalances are in your body? Like your individual blueprint, right? Then from there, we do the testing to see, well, if your body is prone to inflammation, let's test and see, are you actually expressing those inflammatory markers?

And if you are then how do we. Give you a food plan that will help you with inflammation. How do we give you a lifestyle and a behavioral plan that will help you? And of course, a supplement plan that will tie into all of that, but you have to have all of those other components so that you can be healthy and well and well balanced.

So the personalized formulas that we do. Tie into all of that. **We look at where your specific deficiencies are and I can make a formula based on that. So that you're not getting overlap of ingredients and that's a common thing**, right? You can go out and buy supplements and there's overlap of the B vitamins there's overlap of the minerals. So where you think you're getting enough from one thing, now you're getting twice as much because you're taking three things that have the same ingredient, right? Vitamin B6 is notorious. Right. And so everything has B6 in it. I feel like, but then you're taking too much B6 and that's no good either.

And so **the formulas that we can make for people allow us to give you the right amounts of specific nutrients at the right levels**. It makes it way more efficient. You're not getting duplicate ingredients. The pill counts are also smaller, right?

You're taking fewer pills, which we know everybody out there has pill fatigue, because you're trying to take one of this and five of that and whatever. And now you're taking 25 pills a day or whatever it may be. So it allows us to keep the pill count low and it's way more. Cost-effective right. you're literally opening one bottle and taking out supplements from that one bottle.

And you don't have to remember, oh, did I take this? And I, did I take that and do I need this? And do I need that? So it makes it so much more efficient on every level. And I can tell you, I made my own formula In addition to you know, Jill has hers, everybody here has their own formulas. But for me, I take supplements again for the right reasons, but you need things. I have thyroid issues. I have inflammatory issues. I have immune

issues, right. I was taking supplements. And when I finally made my own form, I feel amazing.

JILL: I can tell you I feel exactly the same. Yeah. I feel so much better since I started my formula.

MERYL: I once said, and I don't know who I said it to here. I remember even when I was taking some inflammatory products, right. I was taking some just out of a bottle and I felt better, but I remember every single morning I'd get up and you'd hear literally from my ankles to my wrist, crack, crack, crack, crack, crack, crack.

JILL: I'm the same. I don't hear that anymore. And the achiness,

MERYL: same thing, same thing. So it's amazing when you take the right nutrients at the right levels for the right reasons where you get them, and yeah, we could go on and on and talk about supplements and answer the questions. But I feel like at least this is the tip of the iceberg.

JILL: I'm sure there's more, but those are the main questions. Been asked over and over and over again. And You're always very informative in your answers.

MERYL: So thank you. This conversation could go on and on, but I feel like if we don't want to end up going down the rabbit hole because then we're going to end up with specific questions, but I'm always happy to do that.

And I'm sure we'll take on another conversation one day, but felt that it was important to at least **dispel some of the mixed myths that we hear and know what you're taking.**

Most importantly, and really **why you are taking it.** And don't just trust anybody with your own healthcare, because vitamins are not something to be taken lightly.

They really aren't. So with that, thank you for joining us. We look forward to having you on our next episode in the next week and make it a great day. Everybody stay healthy.

This is your rebel nutritionist signing off.