

Len Lopez: Why Your Supplements Aren't Working

The time has finally come: you're tired of taking medications that are only treating the symptom. Because you want to take a safe, natural approach, you might have already tried a supplement program but have been disappointed with the results. Why haven't you gotten the results?

This is a problem I hear about all too often, but there could be several reasons you're not getting healthier from all of the supplements you are taking.

Inferior Supplements

You could be taking an inferior or poorly manufactured product. There are lots of these around. Unfortunately, many manufacturers focus on the price, NOT on the quality of the product. They use inexpensive nutrients that are poorly absorbed. You, as the consumer lose.

Unless you know what to look for on a label, you could easily be paying for a product that's not going to help much. Be careful of supplements sold at the big discount shopping stores. Many times, these products only focus on the price, not the quality.

Compliance

The second reason for poor results could be compliance. It's easy to understand that you can NOT walk five minutes a day, or do only five push-ups and hope to get in shape. To reap desirable benefits, you need to walk at least 20-40 minutes or do 20-40 pushups a day. So why do so many people only take one capsule of "whatever," when the recommended dosage is two to three capsules, twice a day?

A simple rule of thumb for many nutritional supplements is the bottle should last about one month. For example, if the package contains 60 capsules, you would typically take two per day. If the package contains 180 capsules, the recommended dosage is probably six per day, unless it is the 'economy size' bottle. Too many people think they get a six-month supply of something when it contains 180 capsules, even though the recommended dosage says "six capsules a day." Proper dosage, much like exercise, is critical in the healing process.

Food Allergies

A third problem is closely related to the first, but instead of inferior raw materials, **you may have a "hidden" food allergy to one or more of the ingredients.** Common food allergens that you could be having a problem with are dairy, wheat, corn, soy, and peanuts. Read your labels. It doesn't take much to illicit a reaction that can interfere with the absorption of that supplement. You'd be amazed how sensitive the body is and how easily it reacts to certain foods.

Poor Digestion

Another reason that is very common is poor digestive function. If you are constantly struggling with indigestion, heartburn, and other irritable bowel problems, how can you expect to digest and absorb the nutrients to help your joints, allergies, immune system, or hormones? Address those digestive and elimination issues first; otherwise you could be wasting lots of money on supplements that aren't absorbed.

Just because you swallowed it doesn't mean you absorbed it! The same goes with our elimination system. If you struggle with constipation or diarrhea, something is wrong and you are contributing to the toxic overload and poisoning of your body.

Pills Not a Cure-All

Supplements only take us part of the way. Diet, stress, sleep, and exercise take us the rest of the way. We might need to implement other lifestyle changes, such as eating foods that keep our blood sugar stable (low to moderate glycemic foods). Don't skip meals!

Stay away from processed, refined foods. How about making a conscious effort to reduce stress in your life? Get some exercise and get a good night's sleep. We can't put all our faith in the supplements. We'll never overcome any health challenge if we don't balance our blood sugar (insulin and glucagon) and stress hormones (cortisol, adrenaline, DHEA).

You can never balance your reproductive (estrogen, progesterone, testosterone) hormones, unless you balance your stress hormones, and you will never balance your stress hormones if you don't balance your blood sugar!

As you can see, there is no 'magic' pill? It would be nice to only swallow one pill for whatever ails you, but realistically that is not how you get healthier. Too often people are swallowing products for specific ailments like diabetes, arthritis, osteoporosis, PMS, prostate, thyroid, or menopause without first addressing the smaller issues that eventually lead up to your major health complaint.

We don't wake up one day with a major problem like irritable bowel, allergies, high blood pressure, loss of libido, or any other degenerative or autoimmune disease. There have probably been many little clues your body has given you: such as indigestion, fatigue, poor elimination, cravings, weight gain, irritability, loss of hair, or difficulty concentrating or sleeping. This tells us that something isn't functioning properly.

Restoring your health is a matter of first restoring normal function. The best results I have seen come from people who follow a simple program that encompasses all of the above

questions. It doesn't matter what your complaint is—it could be fatigue, weight gain, PMS, hot flashes, heart disease, arthritis, or some other degenerative or autoimmune disease.

The point is, before you start swallowing some magic formula, you need to make sure all of the key areas (digestion, elimination, hormones, blood sugar) are functioning properly. Otherwise you may be caught in a 'vicious' cycle, where one system throws another system out of balance.

I encourage you to take our online health quizzes to help you identify the root cause of your problem, as well as look at our Healthy Steps Program to learn what steps you should be taking to get over the hump. The worse thing you can be doing is swallowing a handful of pills and not getting better.

Dr. Len Lopez is a nutrition and fitness expert and creator of The Work Horse Trainer. He speaks extensively on diet, exercise, and how stress can affect your overall health and wellness.

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