

NUTRITION

Supplements in Your 70s and Beyond

Give your immune system a boost by taking a few vital pills *By AMY PATUREL*

• **Dietary requirements change** as you age, and while experts recommend getting most of your nutrients from food, sometimes that isn't possible. "Our guts become less efficient as we age, particularly when we reach our 60s and 70s, and that limits our ability to get sufficient nutrients from food," explains Diane McKay, a nutrition research scientist at Tufts University in Boston. As always, consult your doctor first.

VITAMIN B12

Even a mild vitamin B12 deficiency may put older adults at risk for dementia, according to a study published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*. But stomach acid, which is required for the body to absorb vitamin B12 from food, declines with age. Since vitamin B12 is essential for optimal brain function, the Institute of Medicine advises adults over 50 to get most of their B12 from supplements. Recommended dose: 2.4 micrograms daily.

VITAMIN D

Vitamin D is essential during your 70s, to protect against illness and infection. The ideal source of this critical nutrient is sunlight. Unfortunately, your body's ability to synthesize vitamin D from sunlight decreases with age. Recommended dose: 800 international units daily. Look for supplements that contain vitamin D3 (cholecalciferol), an active form that's more effective than its vitamin D2 counterpart.

PROTEIN

When you hit your 70s, your ability to build muscle mass deteriorates. Plus, your protein needs grow even as your intake and appetite may wane. "Once you lose more than 10 percent of your muscle mass, your immune system doesn't function properly," says Randall J. Urban, chair of the Department of Internal Medicine at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. The good news: Supplementing with protein powders or pills can increase lean body mass and muscle. Recommended dose: 20 to 30 grams of whey protein powder mixed into a daily shake.

Do I Need a Multivitamin?

It can't hurt, but it likely won't help. If you take one, try a formulation for people 50-plus.

EAT THESE FOR EVEN BETTER RESULTS

If you supplement your diet, also consume foods rich in these critical nutrients. Here are some good food sources.

Protein



Beef, chicken, beans, almonds

Vitamin B12



Clams, beef liver, trout, cheeseburger, sirloin

Vitamin D



Tuft, mackerel, beef liver, cheese, egg yolks