



'If you're looking for the best supplements to keep your mind sharp and flexible, you'll need essential fats and phospholipids which make up 60% of the dry weight of the brain'

PATRICK HOLFORD
INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED HEALTH GURU

'I don't differentiate between organic vitamins and synthetic ones,' says Struwig. 'The molecular structure of vitamin C is almost the same whether it is copied or natural. The difference is so marginal that it's just not worth the worry.'

The choice of which vitamin to choose is difficult as it is without being confronted with shelf on shelf of a myriad mixtures and dosage recommendations. Ascencao is pro those products that are closer to natural form and Struwig recommends slow-release capsules. Both options translate into more nutrients being absorbed by the body as opposed to the body only taking what it needs at the time of dosage and disposing of the excess.

Yet another aspect that Ascencao considers important is packaging. 'Glass is the ideal manner in which to store vitamins because it offers the best protection against the damaging UVA and UVB rays of visible light.'

Most nutritionists agree that without professional advice, knowing what vitamins your body lacks is somewhat difficult but all agree that a good starting point is a multivitamin, combined with, suggests internationally acclaimed health guru, Patrick Holford, vitamin C and essential fats twice a day.

'That's the cornerstone of a good supplement programme,' he told me. 'But it's vital to get the right dose. For example, a good multivitamin should give you 10 mg of zinc, at least 100 mg of magnesium, plus 20 mg or more of the main B vitamins, 10 mcg of B12 and 15 mcg of vitamin D. These are the vitamins we are most often deficient in.'

There are times, however, when the body is put under more strain and a multivitamin just isn't enough to counteract the effects of stress, physical endurance and recovery from illness, not forgetting mental agility.

When a body is under stress, Holford points out that blood sugar levels are all over the place. 'Chromium helps to stabilise blood sugar, especially in combination with cinnamon,' he says. 'If you're looking for the best supplements to keep your mind sharp and flexible, you'll need essential fats and

phospholipids which make up 60% of the dry weight of the brain.' Such fats and phospholipids can be found in omega 3 and 6.

'If you participate in demanding or excessive sport, the immune system may become depressed if you don't take in enough antioxidant nutrients. The same is true after an infection,' says Holford. He recommends two grams of vitamin C daily as well as zinc, black elderberry and an African ginger extract called Immune C. Extreme burnout can be treated with the amino acid tyrosine for a natural boost while promoting sleep, and relaxation can be achieved with the amino acid GABA to switch off adrenalin.

Bear in mind that there is no quick fix when it comes to vitamins – the best result comes from extended use. Vitamins too, are becoming increasingly popular not just for the protection they offer against the effects of hectic lifestyles but also the anti-aging properties that come from being as close to optimum health as possible.

If you multiply the health-stimulating benefits by the number of studies that are well-documented proving that vitamins and supplements can, and do, protect us against heart disease, cancer and other debilitating diseases and discomforts, then who wouldn't want to benefit from them? **JSE**



A BETTER PILL TO SWALLOW

Sapa reported in March that the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has joined an EU consortium to research the safety of plant food supplements, including vitamins. This is currently an unregulated industry in SA. It is hoped that better guidelines and a more regulated environment will help to curb the advertising of plant food supplements as cures for medical conditions such as HIV/Aids or TB.

CSIR project co-ordinator Paulo Meoni says this four-year study will also analyse the benefits and risks associated with plant food supplements. CSIR noted that one of the risks associated with plant food supplements is their effect on prescription drugs. 'Sometimes food supplements may interact with the activity of drugs ... they could decrease the effect of the drug or increase its side effects,' says Meoni.