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Vitamins and Teenagers: A Personal Statement

by Stephen H. Brown, PhD

(OMNS, Jan 26, 2010) In our house, vitamin supplements sit on the counter in open bowls like nuts, dried fruits, or jelly beans.

Colds, respiratory illnesses, intestinal viruses, mono, and other infectious diseases are constantly present in American schools. In response, my teenage kids have placed four bowls on the kitchen counter - a large one in the middle full of vitamin C surrounded by three smaller bowls of niacin, vitamin D, and thiamine tablets. They help themselves to the vitamins when they feel the need, and many of their friends have adopted the idea as well. Regularly, the kids report that the vitamins actually work. The most frequent comments are, "Wow, I can breath through my nose again!", and "I was sure I was getting sick yesterday but I feel fine today."

How did this start? My father introduced me to vitamin C as a teenager and I was further inspired by Linus Pauling's *"How to Live Longer and Feel Better."* (1) In order to safely raise my kids on extra vitamins with maximum effectiveness, I started actively researching orthomolecular medicine. As a result, I advised my teenage children to focus on responsive dosing of four vitamins that are underrepresented in modern diets. I provided the following suggested daily doses as a starting point:

6000 mg of vitamin C
4000 IU of vitamin D
200 mg of thiamine
250 mg of time-release niacin

There is an obvious association between vitamin intake and poor health. Teenagers can understand this. Some might think that it is not good parenting to let teens have unfettered access to nutrients. We need to constantly remember that these and other vitamins are non-prescription for a reason. (2) As previous Orthomolecular Medicine News Service articles have pointed out (3), vitamins are remarkably safe. They are far better than sugary candy, fast foods loaded with sodium and fat, or caffeine-laced soft drinks.

Vitamin supplements have been widely available for only a few decades. For the first time, families have the ability to independently control intakes of essential nutrients. A very large amount of research has repeatedly shown that proactively controlling micro-nutrients is necessary to optimize health.

Easy access, peer acceptance, and occasional obvious usefulness, in that order, appear to me to be important motivators for teenagers. I am hopeful that my kids are more sensitive to their own health and the health of their friends, and are looking for an association between supplement use and improved health.

The kids know I'm the family "expert" on vitamins and I have occasional in depth conversations. I rarely maintain their interest. Vitamins have not, in my opinion, taken health care's center stage because this theory is not particularly exciting. But you can prove it works by giving it a fair trial.

The vitamin revolution is about behavior. I don't care why the kids take vitamins B1, B3, C, and D. I just care that they take them, and stay well as a result. Watching my children and their friends independently control their vitamin intake has been a turning point for me. I believe that my kids are ordinary kids and that most kids will respond similarly.

Media scare stories aside, the overwhelming scientific evidence is that we are living in a time of epidemic vitamin deficiency. Supplements correct that when food groups eating does not or can not. Deficiency of just these four vitamins is often responsible for the multitude of disorders that qualify children for special education and asthma medication. Later in life, inadequate vitamin intake clearly contributes to heart disease, cancer, diabetes, excessive dental cavities, anorexia, depression, dementia, and sleep disorders. Persons wishing to

confirm or question this statement are encouraged to look at the Orthomolecular Medicine News Service archive, freely accessible at <http://orthomolecular.org/resources/omns/index.shtml> .

With the stakes so high, all methods of increasing consumption of these four vitamins are worth consideration. My kids have definitely benefited from supplemental vitamins. I'm hopeful that other parents will find this simple option equally useful.

(Stephen H. Brown received his Ph.D. in Chemistry from Yale. He has worked for industry in the field of heterogeneous catalysis since 1988 and has 80 patents. Dr. Brown has been blogging at www.cforyourself.com since 2006, and contributing to the Orthomolecular Medicine News Service since 2007.)

References:

(1) Reviewed at <http://www.doctoryourself.com/livelonger.html> .

(2) Bronstein AC, Spyker DA, Cantilena LR Jr, Green JL, Rumack BH, Giffin SL. 2008 Annual Report of the American Association of Poison Control Centers' National Poison Data System (NPDS): 26th Annual Report. *Clinical Toxicology* (2009). 47, 911-1084. The full text article is available for free download at <http://www.aapcc.org/dnn/Portals/0/2008annualreport.pdf> . Vitamins statistics are found in Table 22B, journal pages 1052-3. Minerals, herbs, amino acids and other supplements are in the same table, pages 1047-8.

(3) More than 75 OMNS news releases are available at <http://orthomolecular.org/resources/omns/index.shtml>

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