

## **SUPPLEMENTAL VITAMINS, OTHER SUPPLEMENTS AND YOUR HEART**

As a general rule taking vitamins or other supplements specifically for your heart health is not recommended. The vitamin and supplement industry is big business and heavily markets its products to the general public. As always, "Let the Buyer Beware." Read the fine print.

Eating a variety of foods provides sufficient vitamins and other nutrients for heart health. There is little evidence that supplemental vitamins or other supplements promote heart health (an exception may be fish oil in some patients).

The potential for harm from supplemental vitamins and other supplements is real.

♥ **The safety of these products is unknown.** An example is ephedra. In early 2004 the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) banned its sale because it increased the risk of heart attack and stroke. Other unsafe products may still be available for purchase.

♥ **The appropriate dose to take is unknown.** Few good medical studies have been done to determine what dose of a vitamin or supplement should be taken. The amount of the product in the pill is often not the same as claimed on the bottle.

♥ **The purity of these products is not guaranteed** since the FDA does not regulate the industry. Pesticides, antibiotics, and even Viagra have been found as contaminants.

♥ **These products may cause unpleasant or dangerous side effects.** Upset stomach, diarrhea, allergic reactions, rash, seizures, elevated blood sugar levels, bad breath, bleeding, liver abnormalities, and other problems have been reported with various supplements.

♥ **Dangerous interactions may occur when taking these products with prescription medications.** This is a very important problem. These interactions may decrease the effectiveness of as well as increase the risk of side effects from prescription medications.

♥ **Buying these products uses money that could have been spent elsewhere to promote your health.**

Taking supplements for other conditions unrelated to the heart may be appropriate. An example is a calcium supplement to help maintain bone strength. Taking a simple multivitamin a day is harmless (with exception for some patients taking blood thinners).

If you take vitamins or other supplements let your physician know. We can discuss details with you regarding specific vitamins and other supplements at your request.

We are pleased to answer your questions on this matter or discuss your condition with other health care professionals.