

### Vitamin Story

#### Unraveling the confusion to get the nutrients your body needs

**Q. I'm confused about taking vitamin supplements. There's so much conflicting information out there as to what we should be taking and how much. Do our needs change drastically throughout our lives and are they really necessary if you're eating a balanced diet? And does brand really matter – it's tempting to go for the cheaper versions, but I've heard that these can be of poor quality and therefore a waste of money? I'm in my early thirties and try to eat well, but like most people I'm not perfect all the time. Please give me your opinion on what type of basic supplement programme I should be on to optimise my health.**

**A.** Every day we hear conflicting information about vitamins; one day vitamin A is potentially fatal, another day vitamin D can cure cancer. But the fact remains that it is increasingly hard to get adequate levels of nutrients from food due to soil depletion, processing and long storage, so it is simply good insurance to take a multi vitamin/mineral. Our needs do change throughout our lives, depending on what our bodies are going through; for example, pregnant women need more folic acid; stressed people might need more B vitamins; those with weakened immunity might need more antioxidants. But our basic nutrient requirements remain the same.

Unfortunately brands are not all of an equally high standard, and you do tend to get what you pay for. For example, cheap calcium supplements tend to come in the form of Calcium Carbonate or chalk, which is very difficult for the body to absorb and utilise properly; the highest quality supplements come from wholefood sources.

Symptoms such as muscle cramps or PMT may be indicators of a nutrient deficiency such as Magnesium, B6 or Essential Fats, but assuming you are relatively fit and well, you might like to investigate “superfoods” such as Spirulina, a blue-green algae that contain high levels of iron and protein as well as providing energy and good basic nutrition with almost no calories. Spirulina is available from Xynergy Health Products [www.xynergy.co.uk](http://www.xynergy.co.uk) tel 03456 585858.

Stella New RSHom is a registered homeopath and dietary therapist based in West Sussex. Prior to her training she spent many years as an expedition leader, taking groups into some of the most challenging parts of the world, where she was inspired by the use of natural remedies for treating all manner of ailments.