

# The Wellness Express

Jump on the train to good health

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## How Medications Impact Nutrients

### Presented by:

The use of prescription drugs continue to climb. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, “Over the last 10 years, the percentage of people who took at least one prescription drug in the past month increased from 44% to 48%. The use of two or more drugs increased from 25% to 31%. The use of five or more drugs increased from 6% to 11%.”<sup>1</sup> Researchers at the Center also noted spending for prescriptions drugs in 2008 was \$234.1 billion – double the amount spent in 1999!

What is not often publicized is how drugs can deplete nutrients in your body. Over half of the top 20 most prescribed medications cause nutrient depletion.

To compound this problem, many of us in North America do not consume adequate amounts of nutrients because of poor dietary habits. Depletion of nutrients can add to a worsening of the health conditions that are being treated by drugs.

This is not an invitation to stop taking medications, as that can be dangerous. However, if you take prescription or over-the-counter medications, you should consult with your pharmacist, chiropractor or physician on how these drugs may cause nutrient deficiencies.

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They may recommend certain supplements and/or dietary changes to boost your daily intake of specific nutrients.

While we cannot cover in a single article all drugs that deplete nutrients, we will cover some of the most popular prescription and over-the-counter medications.

### Depression

Drugs to treat depression are the most prescribed medications for people between the ages of 20 to 59. Unfortunately, these drugs actually decrease levels of the B vitamins, which are vital for good neurological health. They also drain magnesium, another important nutrient for the brain as well as the cardiovascular system.

### Birth Control (Oral Contraceptives)

Like antidepressants, the use of birth control medications can exhaust levels of B vitamins. One study showed that oral contraceptives diminish B12 and folic acid levels by 40 percent.<sup>2</sup> Contraceptive drugs deplete the important antioxidant vitamin C. Women using these drugs can also become deficient in magnesium. This can lead to muscle cramps, anxiety and depression.

### Exercise of the Week

Range of Motion: Rotation

Difficulty: Easy

*(Consult your chiropractor before doing this or any other exercise.)*

Start: Sit upright in chair.

Exercise: Turn head as far to one side as you can. Stop when you feel resistance to movement, but no pain. Hold for 10-15 seconds. Then, turn head as far to other side as you can. Once again, stop when you feel resistance, but no pain. Hold for 10-15 seconds. Repeat 5-10X per side.



## Diabetes

There are 10.8 million North Americans with diabetes. Two classes of diabetic medications, sulfonylureas and biguanides, may impede enzymes involved in the creation of coenzyme Q10, a powerful antioxidant that's also vital in energy production and heart health. Metformin, a biguanide, is one of the most prescribed diabetic medications and research indicates it can deplete vitamin B12 and folic acid.<sup>3</sup>

Ovarian cancer is particularly dangerous as it usually doesn't show symptoms until it has spread to other parts of the body. But research from a Canadian study indicates women who participate in frequent moderate exercise or have a job that requires moderate to intense physical activity are less likely to develop this often deadly form of cancer.<sup>3</sup>

## Gastrointestinal Health

Medications in this category include drugs for heartburn, acid reflux and ulcers. H2 blockers, which control stomach acid levels, have been shown to boost the risk of B12 deficiency, which can sometimes lead to dangerous and irreversible neurological damage. Proton pump inhibitors are a group of medications that reduce gastric acid, but also boost the risk of osteoporosis.<sup>4</sup>

## Heart Health

Cholesterol-lowering drugs are the most prescribed medications for people aged 60 and over.<sup>1</sup> The statin class of drugs, including Lipitor, block a chemical process in the liver from creating cholesterol. However, these types of medications also deplete coenzyme Q10, a substance found in nearly all your cells and important in creating energy.

A deficiency of coenzyme Q10 is linked to muscle damage.<sup>6</sup> The coenzyme also plays a role in controlling blood pressure. Like statins, high blood pressure beta blocker drugs cause a depletion of coenzyme Q10. Research reveals thiazide diuretics rob the body of potassium, zinc and magnesium.<sup>7</sup> Loop diuretics excrete potassium, calcium, zinc, and thiamine (vitamin B1). In a 2003 congestive heart failure study, thiamine deficiency occurred in 98 percent of patients taking the loop diuretic furosemide (80 mg/day)<sup>8</sup>

Another study investigated the effects of strength training on breast cancer survivors. Participants attended a strength-training program twice weekly over a six-month period. As expected, the participants saw improved strength in their bodies and a reduction in body fat. But the psychological benefits for the cancer survivors were also powerful. As well as a lessening of depression and anxiety, participants reported increased confidence and felt a better sense of control over their bodies.<sup>5</sup>

## Musculoskeletal Health

Your chiropractor can tell you how certain medications can impact your musculoskeletal health. Side effects from some drugs can cause muscle cramps, muscle weakness and headaches. Deficiencies in certain minerals and vitamins can lead to a number of unpleasant health consequences, including poor balance, coordination problems and a decrease in bone density.



You can now see why it's important to monitor your medications for possible nutrient depletion. So be sure to keep your chiropractor informed of any drugs and supplements you currently use or plan to use.

## A Quote

"We do not stop exercising because we grow old – we grow old because we stop exercising."

- Dr. Kenneth Cooper

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