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update*

Missing Nutrition

A dietician group's month-long nutritional campaign snubs supplements.

In case you missed it, March was National Nutrition Month, intended to “promote the American Dietetic Association (ADA) and its members ... as the most valuable and credible source of timely, scientifically based food and nutrition information.” If that was the mission, then the ADA failed. Once again, the group snubbed nutritional supplements—not mentioning them once during an entire month dedicated to nutritional education. This is especially confounding since the ADA lists among its objectives the desire to “improve consumer protections in, and information about, food, food ingredients and dietary supplements.”

The ADA's lack of useful supplement information is nothing new. The group and its members have always insisted that if most consumers simply eat right, all of their nutritional needs will be met. This simplistic position just doesn't work in a modern world that creates more nutritional demands than ever. In this year's National Nutrition Month, the ADA missed a golden opportunity to do its job and educate consumers on supplements.

We Need More

According to a report from the CDC, *Promoting Preventive Services for Adults Ages 50-64*, nutrition among the US population “needs major improvement.” There are many theories as to why, but our food supply is one suspect. Mass agricultural practices produce many nutrient-depleted foods. For example, farmed fish contain fewer omega-3 fatty acids, while high-yield

fruit and vegetable crops are believed to supply less nutrition per serving. So a consumer could be “eating right” and still not get all the nutrition they expect to be getting.

Another factor in poor nutritional status: It is believed that as we get



older, our ability to produce, absorb and utilize some nutrients diminishes. Illness can increase the nutritional needs of older adults, while many medications can interfere with nutrient absorption and deplete the body's nutritional stores. With advancing age, the risk of nutritional deficiency—and all of its associated symptoms and health problems—may increase. In fact, one study found that 32% of subjects age 50 and above could be at risk for malnutrition.

Given these complex factors working against healthy nutritional status, it's hard to believe the ADA's “just eat right” advice is a viable health strategy. Eating right is a vital starting point, but it may not be enough to achieve peak nutritional well-being.

Supplement Solutions

Dietary supplements are a safe, reliable and affordable way for consumers to be certain they are getting the nutrition they need. What may be most distressing about the ADA's failure to educate on supplements during National Nutrition Month is that consumers want to learn. The number of Americans who use nutritional supplements is now approaching 200 million.

While the National Nutrition Month message of “eat more colorful fruits and vegetables” may be truthful, the millions of Americans who take supplements might prefer to be educated on cutting-edge vitamin D research, which nutrients promote healthy aging or those supplements that might help promote healthy cognitive function. Additionally, the ADA would be doing the public a great service by providing information on whole food-based nutritional supplements, which may offer the best of both worlds by delivering nutrients directly from the ADA's preferred source—colorful fruits and vegetables.

With National Nutrition Month having come and gone with no mention of supplements, the message is clear: Americans who wish to learn about supplemental nutrition cannot rely on groups such as the ADA—or the government, for that matter—to educate them. Consistent with the health freedom credo, people must proactively take matters into their own hands and educate themselves to continue making healthy supplement choices. For more information on health freedom, visit the Nutritional Health Alliance at www.nha2011.com. ♦

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