

Study finds usage of, recommendations for supplements common within various physician specialties

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For physicians within several medical specialties, including dermatology, cardiology and orthopedics, personal usage of and patient recommendations for dietary supplements are quite common, according to a study published in *Nutrition Journal*, a peer-reviewed, on-line journal that focuses on the field of human nutrition.

The 2008 "Life...supplemented" Healthcare Professionals (HCP) Impact Study found that 75 percent of dermatologists personally use [dietary supplements](#) and 66 percent recommend supplements to their patients; 57 percent of cardiologists personally use dietary supplements and 72 percent recommend supplements to their patients; and 73 percent of orthopedic specialists personally use dietary supplements and 91 percent recommend supplements to their patients.

"Health professionals including physicians have an interest in healthy lifestyles and in habits that may contribute to wellness, which may include the use of dietary supplements. Some surveys of physicians suggest that they are as likely as members of the general public to use dietary supplements," the study authors state.

The most commonly reported product taken by these specialists was the multivitamin—with 44 percent of all cardiologists, 61 percent of all dermatologists, and 57 percent of all orthopedists indicating they had taken a multivitamin within the past year. Additionally, over 25 percent

of physicians in each specialty said they had used omega-3/fish oil supplements, and over 20 percent of each of the three specialty groups said they had taken a botanical supplement in the past year, with green tea being the botanical most frequently mentioned.

Overall health and wellness was the top reason these physicians reported for taking supplements, including 32 percent of cardiologists, 42 percent of dermatologists and 43 percent of orthopedists. Heart health was mentioned by more than a quarter of cardiologists and orthopedists, while bone health was mentioned by about a quarter of orthopedists and dermatologists. Lowering cholesterol was cited by 20 percent of cardiologists, joint health by 29 percent of orthopedists, and skin, hair and nails by 16 percent of dermatologists.

The survey found that most of the physicians who reported supplement use were long-term users. About half of the supplement users in each specialty said they had taken supplements for four to 10 years, and about a third said they had taken supplements for more than 10 years.

When it comes to why these specialists recommend supplements to patients, top reasons were often related to the physicians' specialty: among cardiologists, lowering cholesterol, maintaining healthy cholesterol, and general heart health; among dermatologists, skin, hair, and nails; and among orthopedists, bone health, joint health, and musculoskeletal pain.

Findings from this survey add to the existing body of research on healthcare professionals' use of/recommendations for dietary supplements. In 2009, [Nutrition Journal](#) published findings from a separate 2007 study from "Life...supplemented" that found that physicians and nurses are as likely as members of the general public to use dietary supplements, and most physicians and nurses recommend supplements to their patients.

More information: Dickinson A, Shao A, Boyon N, Franco J. Use of dietary supplements by cardiologists, dermatologists and orthopedists: report of a survey. Nutrition Journal 2011, 10:20
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