

Dietary supplement use among US adults more prevalent than previously thought

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Dietary supplement use by U.S. adults is more prevalent than indicated by published data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys (NHANES), according to a new article in the peer-reviewed *Journal of the American College of Nutrition (JACN)*. The review article is based on five consecutive years of online market research studies, conducted by Ipsos Public Affairs for the Council for Responsible Nutrition (CRN).

According to Annette Dickinson, Ph.D., corresponding author and a consultant for CRN, "This new review adds to the literature about usage patterns of dietary supplement users. The NHANES data is of course invaluable, but it only asks respondents about their dietary supplement usage over a 30-day period. The CRN/Ipsos data included regular, occasional and seasonal use throughout the year, which more realistically captures the full scope of dietary supplement utilization."

The review article noted that overall supplement use as reported by respondents to the CRN surveys in 2007-2008 ranged from 64 to 69 percent. "Regular" use of [dietary supplements](#) ranged from 48 to 53 percent—levels equivalent to the overall prevalence reported in NHANES. The CRN surveys asked regular users whether they used a variety of products or only a multivitamin. Over the five-year period, the percentage of regular users who reported they used a variety of supplements increased, while the percentage that said they used only a multivitamin declined. By 2011, the last of the five years, twice as many regular users said they used a variety of products, compared to those who

used only a multivitamin. The primary reasons given for using dietary supplements were "overall health and wellness" and "to fill nutrient gaps in the diet."

In agreement with other research cited in a recent review , the CRN surveys documented the fact that users of dietary supplements are more likely than nonusers to adopt a variety of healthy habits.

"What the data tells us," said Judy Blatman, senior vice president, communications, CRN, and one of the study's co-authors, "is that dietary supplement usage is a mainstream practice, and, contrary to some assertions, supplement users do not use these products as a license to slack off on eating right or exercising, but instead are health conscious individuals trying to do all the right things to be healthy. They are more likely than nonusers to try to eat a balanced diet, visit their doctor regularly, get a good night's sleep, exercise regularly, and maintain a healthy weight."

Dr. Dickinson observed, "The CRN data and NHANES data both indicate that half to two-thirds of American adults use dietary supplements and that their motivation comes from a desire to stay healthy. The evidence suggests that supplement use is viewed as one component of an overall wellness strategy."

More information: "Consumer usage and reasons for using dietary supplements: report of a series of surveys" *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* 2014; 33(2):176-182

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