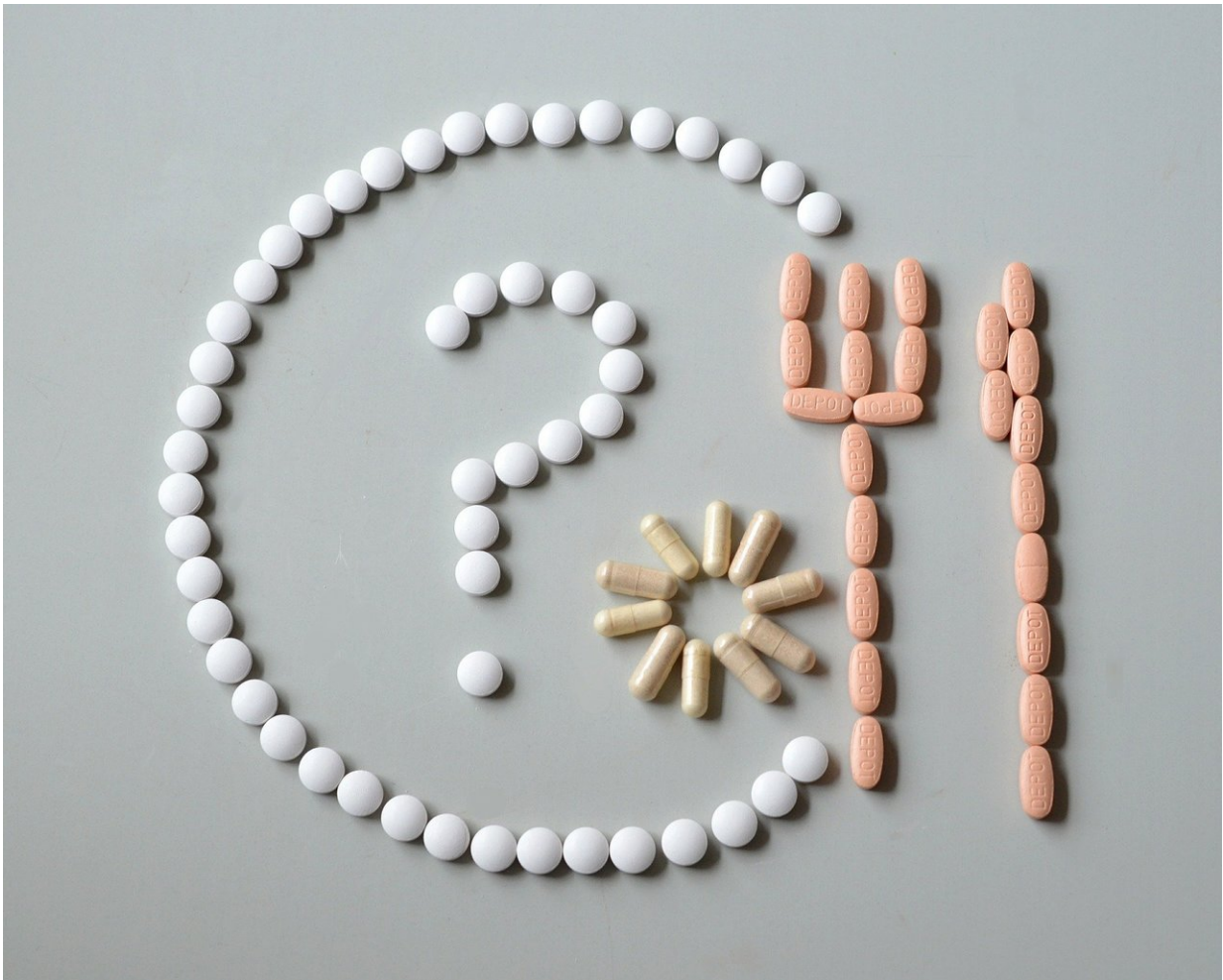


# Quinn on Nutrition: Do vitamin patches work?

November 5 2021, by Barbara Quinn-Intermill, Monterey Herald

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I sometimes consult with overweight patients who are considering bariatric (weight loss) surgery. For some individuals, the need to take specific vitamin and mineral supplements for the rest of their lives is not an easy pill to swallow. To not do so, however, puts them at risk for serious nutrient deficiencies.

Still, some patients balk at having to take so many pills on schedule...forever. That had led at least one physician in our area to advocate for a skin patch to deliver necessary vitamins and minerals.

## **Great idea, but how well do they work?**

A few nutrients such as vitamins C and E in some beauty creams can be absorbed into the skin, though in limited amounts. These "topical" ointments are only skin deep, however.

Patients who have undergone [gastric bypass surgery](#) have had the upper part of their stomach disconnected and rerouted to their [small intestine](#). In addition to making it hard to eat much (hence, the rapid [weight loss](#)) this procedure limits the body's ability to absorb certain nutrients. That's why these patients need an effective way to receive extra vitamins and minerals into the body.

Unfortunately, there are few [human studies](#) to support the exclusive use of skin patches for the types of vitamins needed by gastric bypass patients. One small study on people who had this surgery compared those who used a [vitamin](#) skin patch with others who chewed and swallowed vitamin pills.

After one year, 82% of those who used the skin patch were lacking in one or more nutrients compared to 40% in the pill group. Overall, the researchers noted that those who used a skin patch had significantly lower blood concentrations of vitamins D, B1 and B12 than patients who

swallowed pills.

Iron and calcium are other nutrients sorely needed by patients after they have gastric bypass surgery. Can these minerals effectively reach the bloodstream and their desired destination in the body through a [skin patch](#)?

It would sure be great if they could, but we still don't know for sure. Some animal studies have shown promise with the use of specially treated patches to help the skin better absorb nutrients but again, data is limited in people.

More studies on humans are underway, so we should know more soon. In the meantime, I'd suggest the tried-and-true methods to get essential nutrients into our bodies. Choose foods that provide essential nutrients with each bite. And chew your food well, as this helps make nutrients more available for your body to use.

Until we have more information, I'd say the best bet after stomach surgery is to swallow chewable or liquid forms of the additional vitamins and minerals needed.

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