

# Powder power: The good, bad and nutrient overload

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Many people are looking to supercharge their health, or simply lose weight, with one of the latest trends in nutrition—powders. Makers of these easy-to-mix nutrient products claim they provide all the essential vitamins needed while helping consumers to lose weight, but what do

they do? How do they affect the body?

University of Alabama at Birmingham Department of Nutrition Sciences assistant professor Lizzy Davis, Ph.D., says, before taking the plunge, it is important to explore these powders' leafy landscape and potential pitfalls lurking within.

Davis says that while powders are not new to the market, all powders, green or not, are different, meaning they have varying ingredients. Most, however, have some form of dried [leafy greens](#) and sometimes fruits that are then blended into powder form.

"People commonly mix this powder into water or smoothies," Davis said. "Because this powder is composed of vegetables and fruits, it can contain and provide nutrients—which exact ones depends on what the specific powder is composed of. This is a quick way to get some additional nutrients when in a hurry or on the go."

She says these powders typically contain calcium and vitamins A, K and C. Some brands also contain more than 10 nutrients that exceed 100 percent of the daily value.

"This means that, with the addition of the drink, including the one scoop of powder, plus the food they consume that day, for some nutrients, people are getting over 100 to 1,100 percent of their daily value, which could exceed upper limits and have dangerous consequences."

Because of this, Davis says these powders should be viewed with the same caution as [dietary supplements](#).

"Be sure to check with your doctor before taking these medications because they can have contraindications to some medications," Davis said.

"There are also other 'green powders' on the market that could be confused with this topic, like matcha green tea powder, so be sure to do your research and understand what is in the supplements you choose to consume."

The take-home message: Davis says it is usually cheaper and easier to get the vitamins and nutrients needed in actual food.

"Powders are typically much more expensive than it would be to purchase the fruits and vegetables one should get on a daily basis," she said.

Davis says having a healthy gut microbiome is important for many reasons, like digestion, immunity and [nutrient](#) absorption. Some [powder](#) manufacturers claim their products include pre-, pro- and symbiotics. Here is a breakdown of what that means:

- Prebiotics are the food for the beneficial bacteria that live in the gut.
- Probiotics contain live microorganisms that help replenish that gut bacteria.
- Symbiotics are the composition of both pre- and probiotics.

Provided by University of Alabama at Birmingham

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