

REAL FOOD™ for REAL PEOPLE

Synthetic Vitamins vs. Real Vitamins

by Steven Davis, D.C., N.M.D.

As a physician who is continually concerned with finding the best sources for nutritional products, I am proud to recommend products from a new and innovative company called NutriHarmony. NutriHarmony uses a revolutionary process that sets the company in a class by itself. The Real Food™ Process utilizes living plant cells (*Saccharomyces cerevisiae*) as the equivalent of a microscopic “organic garden,” capable of converting USP-grade vitamins, minerals and other natural substances into biologically complete, bioactive foods. This extraordinary process produces the purest concentrated nutrients and represents a quantum leap in the science of nutrition and whole food supplementation.

To fully understand the ramifications of this discovery, it is necessary to realize that there are currently very few sources that are capable of providing nutrients in a supplement that is truly bio-active (available to the body) in a whole-food form. Unfortunately, most of the nutritional supplements that are available in the market – whether found in a drugstore, health food store or nutritionist’s office – are actually created using synthetic ingredients. (Frost, 34)

This widespread use of synthetic, inorganic ingredients can be traced to both economic and philosophic concerns. Historically, it has not been cost-effective to make vitamin supplements from real, whole-food sources. For instance, it literally takes a ton (2,000 pounds) of unmilled (unrefined, whole) rice to provide about five grams – or one level teaspoon – of vitamin B1. Synthetics, on the other hand, can be easily mass-produced and can help increase the labeled potencies sought by consumers.

You may be wondering about all the products purported to be made from “natural” or “organic” ingredients. Unfortunately (for consumers), the word “natural” is undefined by law, so – although it may be on the label – it “does not necessarily mean that the vitamin in the bottle is simply extracted from a natural food source. The term ‘natural’ really refers to the fact that the supplement does not contain other unnatural ingredients, such as coal tars, artificial coloring, and preservatives.” (DeCava, 39; Lieberman, 40)

There are two basic points of view when it comes to vitamin supplementation:

- 1) Vitamin factors (parts) can be made and should be prepared in a chemically ‘pure’ (free from all associated components) form, in a high concentration (‘high potency’).
- 2) “Vitamins are just like other food factors: they exist as extremely complex groups of associated substances of a synergistic (cooperative) nature...if the complex is taken apart (fractionated), it is no longer capable of producing its normal, nutritional and metabolic effect or function.” (DeCava, 23-24)

The tension that results from this dichotomy revolves around the question: Is there really any difference between synthetic and real vitamins? The proponents of viewpoint #1 would say: “Definitely not. For all intents and purposes, they are the same.” The proponents of viewpoint #2 would declare that there is a fundamental and essential difference, one that necessitates using whole food sources, no matter what the cost.

If we closely examine the nature of synthetic vs. real vitamins, it quickly becomes evident that, no matter how closely it may resemble a real vitamin, the synthetic product is still a mirror image, or imitation. “The synthetic product is always a simple, isolated chemical substance, while the natural product is a complex mixture of related and similar and interdependent materials.” (DeCava, 32) This means that there is a difference in essence, or nature, but the question still remains whether there is any distinction when it comes to function.

Judith DeCava, M.S., L.N.C. has gone to great lengths in her book, *The Real Truth About Vitamins and Antioxidants*, to show that synthetic vitamins do function very differently from real vitamins. According to DeCava, synthetics are functionally foreign to the body. The body will not recognize them as true nutrients, even though they may contain all of the individual molecular components of a nutrient. Vitamins are actually groups of chemically related compounds that include synergistic co-factors (such as amino acids, enzymes, and, even, simple sugars) that are necessary for the nutrient’s use by the body. (DeCava, 13) Synthetics, on the other hand, are “chemically isolated...fractions – single vitamin components – even if several or many are combined into one tablet or capsule” and, therefore, lack these natural co-factors. (DeCava, 30)

In order for a vitamin to be used in the body, the co-factors must be present, and when they are missing, the body will be forced to steal them from its own internal resources, thus causing a depletion – an imbalance in a person’s biochemistry. (DeCava, 31) Synthetics, in effect, are little more than “disabled, debilitated (chemicals) of little or no value to living cells” and, although the body will use them if nothing better is available, these nutrient substitutes certainly do not provide the same benefits that organically created elements do. (DeCava, 13)

It is easily understood that a person can’t expect to provide the body with appropriate nutritional support by eating handfuls of dirt or rocks – even though they contain minerals the body needs. It is just as logical to presume that consuming synthetic or chemical components that are meant to mimic nutrients cannot be as beneficial to the body as organically based nutrients. Real vitamin complexes “readily find their way into the normal chemical actions and changes (biochemistry) essential to energy, growth, repair, function and sustenance of life;” synthetics do not. (DeCava, 30)

With this in mind, it is easy to see that a vitamin supplement cannot simply be an individual chemical or group of chemicals. Supplements must be “food concentrates, intact, integrated, with their vitamin complexes incorporated so as to retain their functional and nutritional integrity.” (DeCava, 23) In its efforts to provide Real Food™ products for health-conscious consumers, NutriHarmony has bridged the synthetic/real gap by creating whole-food, biologically available supplements using a living source as the foundation. It is this breakthrough that truly rockets the company’s products to the forefront of the nutritional market.

Sources:

Alters, Sandra, Ph.D., *Biology: Understanding Life*. Portland; Mosby, 1996

DeCava, Judith A., M.S., L.N.C., *The Real Truth About Vitamins and Antioxidants*. Brentwood Academic Press, 1996

Forst, Mary, M.A., *Going Back to the Basics of Human Health*, 1997

Jensen, Bernard, M.D., and Anderson, Mark, *Empty Harvest*. Garden City Park, NY; Avery Publishing Group, Inc., 1973

Lieberman, Sheri and Bruing, Nancy, *The Real Vitamin and Mineral Book*. Garden City Park, NY; Avery Publishing Group, Inc., 1970