



August 4, 2010 – Grand Rapids, MI

Absorption

“Why would you take more than the RDA? It’s a waste of money because the nutrients just pass right through you.” You’ve forwarded comments to that effect from family, friends, physicians, and other health experts. They know little to nothing about nutrition, or they wouldn’t make such a comment. The Recommended Dietary Allowance, or RDA, is enough to prevent a deficiency disorder—not enough to help with optimal health.

Every vitamin and mineral is absorbed at a different rate, and some have no upper limit; the body will take what it can use and let the rest go. Let’s use vitamin B12 as an example, one that is poorly absorbed. The RDA is 2.4 mcg per day, which would be 100% of the Daily Value. It was set with the knowledge that only half will be absorbed, meaning we need only 1.2 mcg to prevent pernicious anemia. But because B12 is so beneficial for brain and muscle function, that may not be enough for today’s lifestyle. If you take in more, a lower percentage is absorbed but more B12 will end up in your blood stream. For example, if you take in 49 times the RDA (4900% DV) or 117.6 mcg, you may absorb only 5% but if you do the math, that’s close to 5.9 mcg; that’s more B12 to make energy and help your body attain optimal health.

So what do you want: optimal amounts even though you may pass some through your system, or the least amount you can take—which may not be enough to make your health the best it can be? Check out the Health Info section of drchet.com for more on the Daily Value. Pass it on to those well-intentioned people who started this whole discussion in the first place.

What are you prepared to do today?

Dr. Chet

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