

March 10, 2004

Ms. Kathryn McMurry
HHS Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
200 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 738-G
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Ms. McMurry,

Thank you for your continued efforts to re-evaluate and update the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

In September 2003, the Council for Responsible Nutrition forwarded you information outlining the health benefits of multivitamins – as a complement to a healthy diet – and their simplicity, safety and cost effectiveness as a preventive measure.

Over the past six months, several new studies published in top medical journals have reinforced that message and found a variety of health benefits associated with various micronutrients taken at levels similar to those found in the typical daily multivitamin. Much of the latest science has focused on the benefits of vitamin D, which is difficult for many people (especially the elderly) to get in recommended levels through diet alone.

- *Neurology* researchers concluded that intake of supplemental vitamin D had a protective effect in reducing the risk of Multiple Sclerosis (MS). No association was found between vitamin D from food and MS.
- A study published in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* found that calcium and vitamin D work together to reduce the risk of recurrence of colon polyps, and a *Journal of the American Medical Association* study concluded that a diet rich in vitamin D appears to protect people from developing potentially cancerous growths in the colon.
- According to a study published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, vitamin D supplements taken for nine months can significantly and safely reduce an elderly person's risk of falling by half.
- In *Arthritis and Rheumatism*, a study showed that a greater intake of vitamin D lowered the risk of rheumatoid arthritis in older women.

In addition, a study published in the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* found that a 24-ingredient multivitamin significantly reduced LDL cholesterol oxidation and homocysteine levels, two risk factors associated with coronary heart disease, and the March edition of the *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism* highlighted a study showing that elderly women with lower levels of vitamin B12 experienced more rapid levels of bone loss in their hips.

The American public continues to struggle with chronic diseases and is looking for ways to live healthier lives. As Dr. Mary Ann Johnson emphasized at your January meeting, the elderly population is particularly susceptible to illness, bone fractures, arthritis, macular degeneration and other health concerns. I hope you will seriously consider advising Americans about the role a simple and inexpensive daily multivitamin can play in promoting health and helping prevent disease.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this information. Summaries and full copies of the seven recent studies are enclosed for your review. If I may be of any assistance, please contact me at 202.776.7929.

Sincerely,

Readers accessing these comments from the CRN website
can read access the abstracts to these studies at:
<http://www.crnusa.org/CRNCommentsHHS031004links.html>

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A Dickinson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Annette Dickinson, Ph.D.
President
Council for Responsible Nutrition

Enclosures