

# Top Supplements Americans Use Are Shifting from Multivitamins to Targeted Health Fixes

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## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › Supplement use among U.S. adults has shifted away from broad multivitamins toward individual vitamins, minerals and other products selected for specific health goals
- › Adults age 65 and older recorded the largest increase in supplement use, rising from 62% in 1999 to 2000 to 78% in 2021 to 2023
- › Taking more supplements doesn't automatically improve your health, making it important to know why you use each product and what specific nutritional need it addresses
- › Whole, minimally processed foods belong at the foundation of your nutrition plan, while carefully selected supplements provide targeted support when your diet falls short
- › Powder-based supplements fit into meals you already eat, reducing the complexity of multiple bottles and pills while making a targeted supplement routine easier to maintain

Americans are rethinking what belongs in their supplement cabinets. A study published in JAMA Network Open tracked how supplement habits changed across more than two decades of nationally representative health data, and the pattern it revealed is clear.<sup>1</sup> The old approach, grab a multivitamin and call it a day, is giving way to more complex, individualized routines built around specific nutrients and health goals.

This shift creates both opportunity and complexity. More than 100,000 dietary supplement products are now available, yet only about 1 in 4 are used under the guidance of a health care professional. Supplements also don't undergo routine U.S.

Food and Drug Administration (FDA) premarket approval for safety and effectiveness. This makes it more important than ever to know why you take each product rather than simply follow the latest health trend.

## **Older Adults Led the Shift Toward Targeted Supplements**

The analysis drew on 11 cycles of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), a nationally representative survey that tracks health and nutrition data, covering the period from 1999 through August 2023.<sup>2</sup>

The study included 63,442 adults age 20 and older, giving researchers a broad view of how supplement habits evolved across different age, income, education, insurance, sex, race and ethnicity groups. Researchers examined which types of supplements they chose, how many products they used and when major shifts occurred.

- **The biggest increases appeared after 2009** — Researchers found that supplement habits remained relatively stable until the 2009 to 2010 survey cycle, after which use rose sharply. The pattern was even stronger when [multivitamin](#)-multimineral products were removed from the analysis. Use of supplements outside these broad formulas rose from 34% to 50%.

Americans increasingly selected separate products rather than depend on a single formula containing numerous nutrients. That distinction matters because adding individual supplements gives you more control over your routine, but it also increases the importance of knowing why you take each product and whether the dose fits your individual needs.

- **Older adults recorded the largest increase in supplement use** — Age created one of the clearest differences in the data. Among adults age 65 and older, supplement use increased by 16 percentage points, from 62% to 78%. By comparison, use among adults ages 20 to 39 rose from 42% to 46%, while use among those ages 40 to 64 increased from 56% to 62%.

Other groups also recorded substantial changes. Supplement use among adults with less than a high school education climbed from 33% to 48%, while use among Mexican American adults increased from 32% to 49%. Across the entire study period, use remained more common among women, older adults, people with higher incomes and education levels, those with health insurance and non-Hispanic White adults.

- **Your supplement cabinet deserves a regular audit** — The study found that supplement use differs substantially according to age, income, education and other personal factors. At the same time, researchers emphasized that people often select products for highly individualized reasons. This means there is no universal **supplement routine** that fits everyone.

You could turn this insight into a simple health challenge. Once or twice a year, list every supplement you take and answer three questions: Why am I taking it? What specific need does it address? Do I still need it? This quick audit helps you move away from collecting popular products and toward a routine based on clear, personal goals.

- **The study identified an important gap between popularity and proven results** — Researchers pointed out that evidence on the health effects of supplements remains mixed. Some research reports benefits from certain products, while other studies find no benefit or report harm. Evidence about interactions between supplements and medications also remains limited for many products.

Just as important, the study tracked what Americans took, not whether those choices made them healthier. Because this was a repeated cross-sectional analysis, researchers examined different snapshots of the population over time rather than follow the same people for nearly 25 years. As a result, the findings reveal major shifts in behavior but don't prove that greater or more targeted supplement use improved health outcomes.

- **More choices make personalized decisions increasingly important** — The researchers concluded that supplement use has become more diverse, with Americans increasingly interested in products marketed for specific health concerns.

This shift gives you more ways to tailor your routine, but targeted doesn't automatically mean necessary, safe or effective for your individual circumstances. The data make the trend clear. What they can't tell you is whether your own routine reflects genuine need or accumulated habit. That question is worth answering for yourself.

## **Build a Supplement Routine Around Your Individual Needs**

A crowded [supplement cabinet](#) isn't a sign of good health; it's often a sign of accumulated marketing. If you can't explain why each bottle is there, the first step is to simplify. I recommend treating supplements as targeted tools rather than substitutes for nutritious food or solutions in search of a problem. Choosing supplements with intention is an improvement over grabbing a multivitamin by default, but only when each choice is grounded in an actual need rather than a marketing claim.

1. **Start with food before reaching for a supplement** — Your body needs vitamins, minerals, protein, carbohydrates and fats to produce energy and maintain healthy function. Get as much nutrition as possible from whole, minimally processed foods, then use supplements to address specific needs.

Build your meals around ripe whole fruit, root vegetables, white rice and other carbohydrates you tolerate well, along with quality protein sources such as grass fed ruminant meat, pastured eggs, [collagen](#) and grass fed dairy if you tolerate it. Choose fats such as grass fed butter, ghee and tallow instead of [seed oils](#).

2. **Make every supplement earn its place** — Take out every bottle you use and write down exactly why you take it. Be specific. "For general health" is not a clear goal. If you can't identify the nutritional need or health concern a product addresses,

reconsider why it's part of your routine.

I recommend repeating this simple five-minute challenge every few months, especially if you tend to add new products without removing old ones. Working with a knowledgeable holistic health care practitioner can help you identify which supplements are worth keeping in your routine and which are better off avoided.

Magnesium is one example in which reaching the recommended 420 milligrams per day through diet alone is difficult.

Even a healthy diet full of magnesium-rich foods often falls short because intensive farming practices have depleted mineral content in soil over decades. In this case, magnesium glycinate, magnesium L-Threonate, and magnesium malate are the preferred forms — glycinate tends to work well if you're more sensitive to supplements or want nighttime support, while malate is better suited for muscle and energy needs.

To find your ideal dose, consider starting with magnesium citrate and gradually increasing your intake until stools loosen, then backing off slightly and switching to your preferred form.

Vitamin D is another example. While it's best to get your vitamin D from sunlight whenever possible, if you don't get outdoors regularly a vitamin D3 supplement helps bridge that gap. The only way to know if your vitamin D levels are in the optimal range is to get your levels tested. Aim for a vitamin D level between 60 and 80 ng/mL (150 to 200 nmol/L), and test every six months to stay within the optimal range. Talk to your healthcare provider about whether this testing is appropriate for you.

Meanwhile, if you take [vitamin D3](#), pair it with [magnesium](#) and [vitamin K2](#) as research suggests these three nutrients work best as a team. In fact, one analysis of health-tracking program data found that people who skip magnesium and K2 need more than twice as much vitamin D to reach the same blood levels as those who take all three together.<sup>3</sup>

The goal isn't to build the largest supplement collection. It's to help you create the simplest routine that supports your individual needs and fits into your actual life. A well-designed supplement routine needs to work on your busiest days, not just when conditions are perfect. Keep nutritious food at the foundation, use targeted supplements to fill genuine gaps and choose formats simple enough to become a natural part of your day.

- 3. Choose formats that fit your real life** — Even a carefully selected supplement does little good if your routine is too complicated to maintain. Multiple bottles, doses and reminders add friction, while swallowing several capsules at once creates another barrier. That's one reason we're reformulating some of our supplements as powders where the ingredients allow it.

A powder that you stir into food connects supplementation to something you already do every day: eat. Instead of creating a separate ritual that requires you to remember another task, the supplement becomes part of an established daily habit. Taste and texture matter, too. A pleasant, easy-to-use product is far more likely to become part of your routine than something you dread taking.

This food-first format also better reflects my approach to supplementation. Real food remains the foundation, while supplements provide targeted support when your diet doesn't supply enough of a specific nutrient. Supplements don't replace nutritious food or excuse a poor diet. Where appropriate, a powder mixed into a meal keeps that relationship clear by making supplemental nutrition part of how you nourish yourself rather than another medical-style ritual built around bottles and pills.

- 4. Pay close attention to the form and dose** — Two products with similar labels aren't necessarily interchangeable. The ingredients, dose, quality and method of use all matter. For example, a supplement that combines numerous ingredients in small amounts might look more comprehensive, but that doesn't mean it provides the right amount of the specific nutrient you need.

Choose products based on a clearly identified need, then pay close attention to exactly what you're getting and how it fits into the rest of your diet and supplement routine.

- 5. Look beyond the claims on the front of the bottle** — Supplement labels are designed to sell products, but the most important information is often found on the back. Read the full ingredient list rather than relying on claims such as "natural," "immune support" or "healthy aging."

Pay attention to unnecessary additives and other ingredients that don't serve the specific reason you chose the supplement. Look for products with transparent ingredient lists, clearly stated amounts and as few unnecessary additives as possible. Quality matters as much as convenience.

*This article is for informational purposes only and does not constitute medical advice. Consult a qualified healthcare provider before making changes to your health regimen.*

## **FAQs About Changes in Americans' Supplement Use**

**Q: How have Americans' supplement habits changed?**

**A:** Americans are increasingly moving away from broad multivitamin and multimineral products and toward individual supplements chosen for specific health goals. The research found particularly strong growth in products marketed for immune, gut, skin and joint health.

**Q: Who had the largest increase in supplement use?**

**A:** Adults age 65 and older recorded the largest increase. Supplement use in this group rose from 62% in 1999 to 2000 to 78% in 2021 to 2023, although use also increased among several other demographic groups.

**Q: How do you decide which supplements belong in your routine?**

**A:** Start with a nutrient-rich, whole-food diet and use supplements to address clearly identified needs. Review each product regularly, know why you take it, pay attention to the ingredients and dose, and remove products that no longer serve a clear purpose.

**Q: Why are some supplements being reformulated as powders?**

**A:** Powders fit more naturally into a food-first approach and make supplement routines easier to maintain. When appropriate for the ingredients, stirring a powder into food connects supplement use to an established daily habit, reduces the need to swallow multiple capsules and helps targeted nutrition feel like part of your regular meals rather than a separate daily chore.

## Sources and References

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- <sup>1, 2</sup> [JAMA Network Open June 15, 2026;9;\(6\):e2619291](#)
- <sup>3</sup> [GrassrootsHealth March 10, 2020](#)