

The Future of Simple Nutrition

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › For decades the supplement industry has competed in one direction only — toward more ingredients, more milligrams, more capsules — on the unspoken assumption that more is better and a complex, multi-ingredient supplement is better than a simpler one with fewer ingredients
- › The complexity of many supplement routines works against the only outcome that matters — whether you take it, consistently, for long enough to make a difference
- › Higher doses do not guarantee that more reaches your cells. In a poorly absorbed form, a larger dose simply means more is wasted
- › Simplicity is the harder achievement; it's easy to throw more into a bottle, and genuinely difficult to deliver what the body needs in a form that's effective, effortless to take, and simple enough to fit a busy lifestyle
- › The future we're building toward is fewer things to take, food-centered formats that fold into a meal. In short, a supplement routine you can actually adhere to, because consistency is the entire ballgame

For decades, the supplement industry has competed in one direction only: toward "more." More ingredients, more milligrams, more capsules, more complexity, longer labels nobody reads. The unspoken assumption was that progress meant addition — that a better supplement was always a more complicated one. We think that era is ending, and that the real breakthrough runs the other way. The future of nutrition isn't more. It's less.



Where Complexity Actually Leads

Look at where all that addition actually leads. It leads to the fistful of pills no one wants to take. It leads to supplement routines so elaborate they collapse the first busy week. It leads to labels packed with names you can't pronounce and forms your body can barely use. Complexity has been quietly working against the only outcome that matters — whether you take your supplements, consistently, for long enough to support your health. All that addition has mostly added friction that often results in dropped routines.

That's the consistent finding whenever researchers look at why people stop their daily pill regimens. Even with prescription medicine — which people have strong reasons to keep up — a meta-analysis of real-world data found that roughly one in five people don't take their daily oral medicines as directed, and about one in four abandon it within the first year.¹

The reviewers' list of fixes wasn't "try harder"; it led with simplifying the dosing regimen. If a complicated routine sheds a quarter of its users in 12 months when health is on the line, a shelf full of optional supplements doesn't stand a chance.

The medical world is, slowly, reaching the same conclusion about "more." In reviews of polypharmacy — the steady accumulation of pills over time — specialists now warn that regimens tend to pile up by default, that a heavier pill count brings real "therapeutic burden" and lower adherence, and that more medicine is not automatically better.²

When the Form Defeats the Dose

There's a second way complexity betrays you, and it hides inside those impressive numbers. A bigger dose in a form your body can't readily absorb doesn't necessarily deliver more benefit — it mostly leads to more being wasted. For example, in a systematic review of magnesium supplements, how much actually got absorbed depended on the form — with organic forms generally better absorbed than inorganic ones — and the proportion absorbed depended on the dose rather than holding steady.³

In other words, if your body absorbs, say 10% of a 100 mg dose (10 mg), taking 200 mg does not result in 20 mg of it being absorbed. In many cases, you just end up excreting a greater portion of it.

So, a supplement boasting an enormous milligram count can quietly underdeliver, while a smaller amount in a well-chosen form may provide "just enough" of what your body needs, resulting in less waste and lower cost. "More" on the label does not equate to "more" in your body. Chasing the bigger number is often chasing the wrong thing entirely.

Simplicity Is the Harder Achievement

Here's what the "more" era misses: simplicity is the more difficult, more valuable accomplishment, precisely because it's harder to reach. Real simplicity isn't the absence of thought. Quite the contrary. It's making sure the product is so well thought out and refined to the point where everything unnecessary has been stripped away and only what works remains.

This requires the supplement maker to identify the most effective form, the ideal dosage (just enough so that it doesn't just end up as expensive urine), and the optimal delivery technology. In short, a simple product often requires more careful engineering.

That's the standard we're building toward, and it shapes every formulation decision we make going forward. Fewer things to take, not more, and supplement formats that fold into meals and beverages, to naturally support a food-centered foundation. For decades, I've promoted whole (ideally organic) food as the best source of nutrition, and that supplements are — as their name proclaims — additions to your diet when certain nutritional needs fall short.

A food-centered supplement regimen also works with how people actually live — busy, mobile, imperfect — instead of how a lab imagines we should live. Few of us can remember to take a handful of pills up to three times a day, and many have a hard time swallowing pills and capsules, which makes skipping doses all the more likely.

Simplicity solves most if not all of the problems that complexity created. A supplement routine you can keep is a supplement routine that can actually do something for you. The simpler it is, the more likely you are to stay consistent — and consistency is key. The most sophisticated formula in the world can improve nothing if you abandon it after a few weeks.

The Bottom Line

This is the direction we believe everything is heading, and it's the direction we've chosen. Not bigger numbers or bigger bottles, but rather more bioavailable ingredients, in the ideal amounts, using the most effective delivery methods available. In some cases, that means powders instead of pills and capsules, and as I've explained previously, one of the biggest benefits of a well-designed powder supplement is that it becomes part of your meal.

You're not choking down pills at a schedule that may or may not coincide with your food intake. You're simply adding nutrition to the food you're already eating anyway. It really doesn't get much simpler than that. And that kind of simplicity is exactly what tends to translate into better long-term adherence.

It can also help switch people's mental perception of their supplement regimen from one of disease ("I have to take these pills because I'm sick") to one of health ("I'm optimizing my diet").⁴ Considering how potent such perceptions can be, using food-centered supplement regimens is an easy way to ward against mindsets that undermine your health efforts.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Doesn't "fewer ingredients" just mean I'm getting less for my money?

A: Not if it's designed well. On the contrary, a supplement that is well-absorbed and has effective delivery can be taken in smaller doses, resulting in both less waste and greater value.

Q: Aren't higher dosages typically better?

A: Not necessarily. How much your body absorbs depends heavily on the form a nutrient comes in, and a large dose in a poorly absorbed form can underdeliver while much of it goes to waste. A sensible amount in a well-chosen form is a more sensible and cost-effective strategy.

Q: Why is "simple" framed as the advance here, rather than cutting-edge ingredients?

A: Because if you want to improve people's nutritional status through a supplement, the biggest problem is not the ingredients themselves but getting people to take it consistently. Complexity is what undermines that. Making the regimen really easy to adhere to — such as just sprinkling a scoop of nutritional powder on meals you're eating anyway — is what helps a routine survive a busy schedule the most.

Q: Does a simpler supplement routine mean a less effective one?

A: No. It means the routine is built around what you'll actually keep doing. An elaborate regimen you abandon in a month does far less for you than a simple one you sustain for years. Simplicity isn't doing less for your health — it's removing what was causing you to quit.

These statements have not been evaluated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

This article is for general education. The products described are dietary supplements intended to support normal health and wellbeing as part of a food-first lifestyle. They are not a substitute for a varied diet, a healthy lifestyle, or the advice of your physician. If you are pregnant, nursing, taking medication, or managing a health condition, talk with your healthcare provider before beginning any supplement.

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.

Sources and References

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