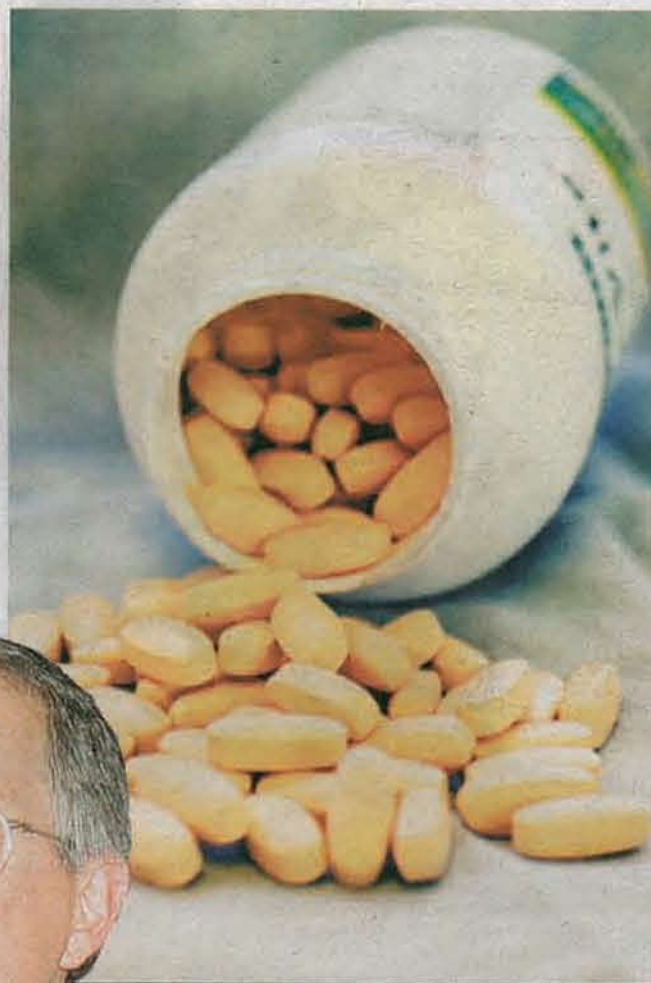


Take a closer look



MacWilliam was in Malaysia to launch the fourth edition of his book.



Not all nutritional supplements are created equal.

Think that all multivitamin supplements are the same? You couldn't be more wrong, writes **MANVEET KAUR.**

YOU have decided to boost your health regime by using nutritional health supplements. You think that all you need to do is walk into a store, pick up a multivitamin, and hey presto in a couple of days you'll reap the benefits, right? Wrong!

No matter what their marketing tactics say, not all nutritional supplements are created equal.

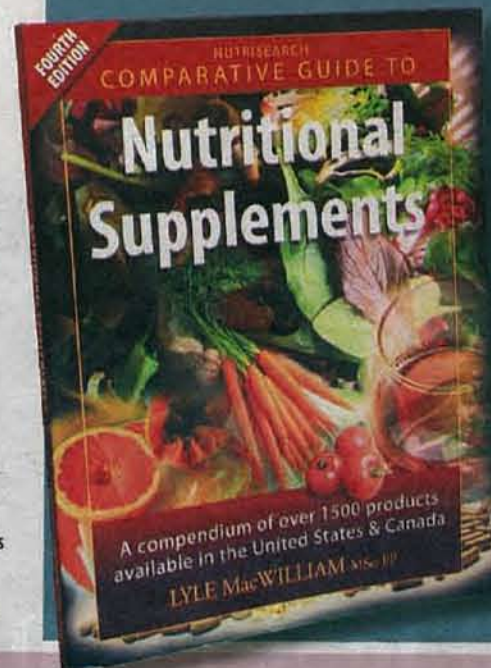
And with so many brands of nutritional supplements in the market today, it is harder than ever to know which brands to trust your health to.

"All nutritional supplements are not the same. Several important factors determine finished product quality. How a product is manufactured is equally as important as what is in it," said Canadian bio-chemist, educator and author Lyle MacWilliam.

MacWilliam, who was in Malaysia to launch the fourth edition of his book, *Comparative Guide to Nutritional Supplements*, said that the first thing we should ask when choosing a supplement is whether it meets the CAPPS requirement.

CAPPS stands for:

Completeness — full spectrum of nutrients;
Absorbability — bioavailable formulas
Potency — optimal potency for efficacy
Purity — pharmaceutically pure;
Safety — no vitamin A or iron; nutrients that are below upper limits for no observable adverse effect.



MacWilliam's book provides a guide to nutritional supplements.

"There are 13 organic compounds and 19 minerals required for optimal health; our bodies cannot manufacture them. Many nutrients manufactured by our bodies are depleted with age, for example coenzyme Q10 and alpha-lipoic acid. Antioxidant enzyme systems are also depleted with age.

"A complete nutritional supplement must address all these issues, provide all essential vitamins and minerals, protect against age-related loss of important nutrients and protect against age-related impairment of critical antioxidant enzyme systems," said MacWilliam, whose book compared over 1,500 nutritional products in North America and ranked them according to a comprehensive, scientific product rating criteria.

On the issue of absorbability, MacWilliam said that many inexpensive supplements do not break down when swallowed.

Many do not dissolve well in the digestive tract, and many also contain inexpensive mineral salts that are not well absorbed.

"Nutrient levels in most products only meet the US Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA). RDAs are insufficient for optimal health. RDAs were created during World War II to develop guidelines for wartime food rationing! They were never intended for optimal intakes," he said.

"We require supplementation at levels far higher than RDAs for many nutrients, he added.

According to MacWilliam, purity is the real safety issue.

"How a product is manufactured reflects the purity of the product. Most US products are manufactured to food-grade standards (GMPs). The highest standard for purity is compliance with pharmaceutical GMPs."

He quoted from Dr S. Srinivasa, a US pharmacopeia, that the vast majority of products manufactured in the US today would "fail to

meet the claims made on their labels."

"A high quality nutritional supplement should not contain iron, excessive levels of vitamin A or exceed the safe upper limits of intake for any nutrient with potential toxicity," said MacWilliam.

During his talk, MacWilliam also cited a study that reviewed 38 years of scientific evidence supporting the need for nutritional supplements and concluded that "insufficient vitamin intake is a cause of chronic illnesses."

"Supplementation is your personal health insurance plan that will help you to age gracefully. It not only helps you when you fall ill, it is there to keep you healthy in the first place."

He pointed out that Malaysia suffers from among the highest obesity rates in Asia, reflecting that 59 per cent of Malaysians will visit a fast-food restaurant once a week or more, compared to only 35 per cent of Americans and 11 per cent of Europeans.

"The modern-day fast food diet simply cannot provide sufficient nutritional value to prevent the consumption of excessive calories and the onset of chronic diseases," said MacWilliam.

Recent evidence shows that the risk of developing cardiovascular disease is inversely proportional to the dietary intake of fresh foods and vegetables.

The 2004 Baltimore Longitudinal study showed that each additional serving of fruits and vegetables is associated with a six per cent decrease in all-cause mortality and a 21 per cent decrease in cardiovascular death.

"It's only when you make educated day-to-day decisions about your diet, lifestyle and supplementation, you can take direct control over your health and your longevity," stressed MacWilliam.

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