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7 supplements women over 40 should take

Who doesn't want stronger bones, healthier skin and more restful sleep?

By Judd Handler

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It's common for some women over 40 to experience a sputtering sex drive, sluggish metabolism, lethargic energy levels, fluctuating moods and other cruel machinations of the aging process.

But life after 40 doesn't have to be left to Mother Nature's fate. Consider getting plenty of exercise, modifying your diet and taking these seven best supplements for women over 40:

1. Strontium: Women over 40 with a family history that includes osteoporosis, or risk factors associated with bone loss should take 340 mg a day of this mineral, says Jacob Teitelbaum, MD, medical director of the national Fibromyalgia and Fatigue Centers. "Strontium has been shown to be almost twice as effective as osteoporosis medications in improving bone density — without the side effects," Teitelbaum says. A study in the New England Journal of Medicine concluded that postmenopausal women who supplemented with strontium **increased bone mineral density** of the lumbar spine by nearly 15 percent over a three-year period.

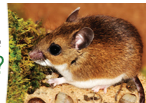
2. Ribose: Another "under-the-radar" nutrient, largely ignored in the \$25 billion supplement market, ribose can help increase energy by an average of approximately 60 percent after three weeks, according to Teitelbaum, who co-wrote a small study, published in the Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine, which concluded that two-thirds of the subjects who supplemented with ribose experienced **more restful sleep and energy**, mental clarity, and less pain. Another small study on ribose (in the European Journal of Heart Failure) concluded that this simple sugar **helps diastolic blood pressure** in congestive heart failure patients.

3. Vitamin D3: The benefits of vitamin D3 (read: **Benefits of Vitamin D**) are numerous, and so many people are deficient nationwide even in the sunshine states, says Dr. Keith Wharton, medical director of BodyLogicMD of Pittsburgh. "Research has shown that adequate levels of vitamin D3 can help maintain a **healthy weight**, reduce risk of **osteoporosis** and even ward off **depression**," says Wharton, who adds that deficiency in vitamin D can also lead to pain in various areas of the body. Supplementing with vitamin D3, in addition to receiving adequate amounts of sunlight, may also help elevate mood, according to several

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studies (such as this review of different studies on the link between low serum levels of vitamin D and *seasonal affective disorder*, also called SAD).

4. Folate: One of the B vitamins, folate may also help prevent or improve episodes of *depression*, according to an editorial in the Journal of Psychiatry and Neuroscience. The same paper concludes that birth defects, more prevalent for post-40 expectant mothers, may be prevented with adequate folate levels. And folate, according to Wharton, is also vital to long-term brain health, along with fish oils. "Sufficient levels of both fish oils and folate have been linked to a reduced risk of cognitive decline associated with aging, including dementia and Alzheimer's," Wharton says.

5. Calcium: When taken in conjunction with adequate levels of vitamin D, calcium absorption is maximized. Just be careful not to take your calcium supplements with iron or caffeine. Both bind calcium in the gut and impede absorption. Leafy-green vegetables are also an excellent source of calcium.

6. Hydrochloric acid: While the name might conjure an image of a chemical weapon used by an evil dictator, hydrochloric acid (aka HCL or betaine hydrochloride) is the main digestive juice in the stomach, along with pepsin. Levels of HCL taper off after age 40, so women who experience bloating or indigestion may want to supplement with HCL. Can maintaining adequate levels of HCL also help with *healthy-looking skin*? A medical study published way back in 1945, in the Southern Medical Journal, suggested that lack of HCL can lead to poor absorption of B vitamins, and consequently, acne and eczema and other skin disorders can develop. "In skin diseases associated with B complex deficiency, there is also a deficiency of hydrochloric acid," reads the study's conclusion.

7. Probiotics: The Postgraduate Medical Journal (PMJ) states that about 1 billion women every year suffer from non-sexually transmitted urogenital infections, such as *urinary tract infections* (UTIs). Many people are aware that probiotics are good for restoring the healthy bacteria in our digestive tracts, but can probiotics also help prevent UTIs? The PMJ reports that excessive use of antibiotics is one reason for the uptick in infections, and observations from a 1973 study concluded that women with no presence of a UTI had healthy levels of one strain of probiotics: lactobacilli.

Will yogurt alone do the trick in preventing vaginal infections? Probably not, says the PMJ. "For many years, physicians have advised patients on antibiotic treatment to take yogurt as a means to prevent yeast vaginitis. However, unless the product is supplemented with [a starter culture and] antifungal lactobacilli ... no infection reduction is likely."

What other supplements should women over age 40 consider taking? Let us know below.

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