

ARE YOUR MEDICATIONS CAUSING NUTRIENT DEFICIENCY?

Long-term doses of certain medications may rob you of calcium, folic acid, crucial B vitamins, among others

Medications are well known for causing side effects, such as nausea or drowsiness. These are the kinds of side effects that you notice and can do something about. But sometimes, a lesser known side effect happens without giving you any warning: nutrient deficiency.



Why It Happens

Using some medications for a long amount of time might lead to nutrient deficiency. In most cases, a drug may interfere with your body's ability to absorb a nutrient from dietary sources. Medications used to reduce acid reflux and heartburn (PPIs) — such as Prilosec, Protonix, Prevacid, and Aciphex — can keep you from absorbing vitamin B12, and low B12 levels in the blood and may lead to confusion, muscle weakness, and falls. PPIs also can cause low calcium and magnesium levels.

In other cases, medications may interfere with natural processes needed to produce nutrients. For example, cholesterol-lowering drugs called statins—such as Lipitor, Crestor, and Zocor—inhibit the production of coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10). CoQ10 plays an important role in preserving the energy supplies of our cells.

“I empower health-inspired individuals to enhance their biggest wealth – their health! With a passion for wellness and possession of unique skills as a pharmacist, I’m here to offer health transformation by focusing on the totality of you!”

-Laura Gold, RPh

Some diuretics to lower blood pressure can also deplete magnesium, potassium, and calcium.

In addition to PPIs, statins, and diuretics, common offenders include anticonvulsants and corticosteroids, both of which may reduce levels of calcium and vitamin D; the diabetes drug Metformin (Glucophage, Riomet), which may reduce levels of folic acid and vitamin B12; and the Parkinson's drugs Levodopa and Carbidopa (Sinemet), which may reduce levels of vitamin B6, vitamin B12, and folic acid.

Detecting The Impact

You may not have obvious symptoms that a medication is robbing you of certain nutrients. That's where your healthcare professionals' supervision comes in—the doctor to check your blood levels for micro and macronutrients and the pharmacist to refine your current regimen.

If you feel that you are having symptoms (see "Symptoms of nutrient deficiency," chart), report them to your doctor and pharmacist as soon as possible, especially if you've been taking a medication for a long time.

Symptoms of nutrient deficiency

If you have these symptoms you may have
Muscle cramps, irregular heartbeat, mood changes	Low magnesium
Muscle weakness, irregular heartbeat, tiredness, constipation	Low potassium
Weakness, numbness, tingling in hands and feet	Low vitamin B6
Low red blood cells, tingling sensation, weakness, numbness, confusion	Low vitamin B12
Low red blood cells, fatigue, pale skin, tender tongue	Low vitamin B9 (folic acid)
Weakened bone, bone loss	Low vitamin D and calcium
Weakened immune system, taste or smell changes, rash, hair loss, diarrhea	Low zinc

Treatment

Addressing nutrient deficiency is complicated and requires an expertise of highly trained professionals. By assessing your health history and medication profile, including all your supplements and over-the-counter medications, your pharmacist, Laura Gold, will work together with you to refine your current regimen and elevate your health outcomes.

If your pharmacist detects that you have a deficiency that may be corrected with supplements, rely on her supervision. By collaborating with your physician, your supplement use can be based on, and monitored with, medical lab tests.

Finally, consider whether your diet may be part of the problem. Your Clinical Pharmacist is proud to introduce the most comprehensive Nutrigenomics Test available to validate your specific nutritional supplement needs and create a personalized nutritional plan.