

Why are Multivitamins so important for long-term health after surgery?

Bariatric surgery changes your digestion and limits the amount of food consumed at a mealtime therefore limiting the nutrients your body can absorb. Studies undertaken on patients who have had Bariatric surgery indicate that as many as 15% will end up with neurological (nervous system) disorders if they don't take supplementary vitamins. As a result, it is important to take multivitamins daily for the rest of your life to protect you from long-term deficiencies.

Multivitamins

It is important to review your vitamin and mineral levels annually through a full blood test to correct any deficiencies that arise over time and to reduce the risk of long-term health complications. A multivitamin is needed lifelong; a Bariatric multivitamin can be vital as it contains all the appropriate nutrients at the appropriate levels post-bariatric surgery. If you are in doubt about the supplements you are taking, it is advisable to make an appointment with your Dietitian or Surgeon to determine if the supplements are meeting your needs.

Some of the key nutrient deficiencies which can cause problems after Bariatric Surgery include:

B vitamins such as B12, B1 deficiency

After gastric bypass surgery, patients will require additional vitamin B12 lifelong. With other types of bariatric surgery, there is a possibility of reduced absorption of vitamin B12 which can lead to increased risk of vitamin B12 deficiency. Untreated vitamin B12 deficiency can cause serious neurological complications, such as irreversible neuropathy. Vitamin B12 can be supplemented orally such as B12 melts 500 microgram dosage daily, or vitamin B12 injections 3-6 monthly. Discuss with your healthcare team which option may work best for you.

Bariatric surgery can also lead to deficiency in Thiamine (vitamin B1) if patients are vomiting consistently, are non-compliant with taking multivitamins or are not following

a nutritionally balanced diet. Symptoms of Thiamine deficiency can include confusion, fatigue, muscle weakness, irreversible neuropathy and dementia. Thiamine deficiency can be prevented with adequate supplementation; however, it is important to consult with your healthcare team immediately if you are experiencing any of these symptoms as they can progress to more serious complications if left untreated.

Iron

Due to the restrictive nature of bariatric surgery, the consumption of iron containing foods reduces and the absorption of iron can also be altered. Sometimes the amount of iron in a multivitamin may not be enough to prevent anaemia. If this is the case, an additional iron supplement may be necessary. Iron deficiency anaemia can cause symptoms such as hair loss, shortness of breath, lack of energy and rapid heartbeat.

Calcium

After gastric sleeve or gastric bypass surgery, the daily calcium requirements from food and supplements increases to 1200–1500 mg daily, and more after other types of bariatric surgery. Calcium citrate is the preferred form around 500-600mg dosage for better absorption. Calcium and vitamin D help protect patients from osteoporosis (weak bones) after surgery.

Vitamin D

You will need around 3000 IU of vitamin D daily. Your multivitamin and calcium supplement often contain vitamin D. If you are not meeting your requirement from these supplements, you may need to consider taking an additional vitamin D supplement. Not meeting adequate vitamin D levels can lead to poor calcium absorption and bone density issues.

We hope that you continue to look after yourself and follow the dietary and supplement regime that was discussed with you before and after surgery. If you are experiencing any concerns with your diet or vitamin and mineral supplementation, please do not hesitate to contact your Dietitian or Bariatric Care Specialist by calling 02 9553 1120. Further support can be found at uppergisurgery.com.au