Too Much of a Good Thing

Doctors are waking up to the dangers of taking vitamin supplements in excess.

It isn’t just self-medication. Doctors often put patients on vitamin formulations for vague symptoms like fatigue. Close on all manner of supplement without realizing it, and without knowing the ill-effects of doing so.

Among mineral supplements taken these days, the common over-the-counter pills are those of calcium. Prolonged overdosing can cause distension, calcium deposits and kidney stones. It can also depress the nervous system. So, if you have been taking calcium pills in the hope of improving your hunching knee, in the long run, you could well be risking hospitalization for kidney stones. An overdose of iron pills, commonly taken in fear...
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A researcher at AIIMS, Delhi, says, “Since there has been no India-centric study as yet, one doesn’t want to sound alarmist by asking people to stop buying over-the-counter vitamin pills. But there’s more than enough data from across the world to suggest that vitamin and supplement use must be regulated.” Dr Tickoo points to another danger of people taking supplements on the recommendation of friends and family members, not doctors. “If healthy people who may occasionally feel weak, supplements are not the answer,” he says. “People must know if they need it and what the side effects are. Vitamin supplements are not something you take life-long.”

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