

# The 18 Best Supplements for Men

We found the fortifiers that will improve your health, brainpower, and sex life

BY LAURA ROBERSON • PHOTOGRAPH BY MITCHELL FEINBERG

**IF YOU CONDENSED YOUR MOST RECENT** meal down to a few pills, would they be tiny dynamos, or the nutritional equivalent of Tic Tacs? If you're like most men, what's on your plate falls somewhere in between—that is, leaving plenty of room for improvement. “If men start to favor certain foods—meat and potatoes, for example—they may develop nutritional blind spots as a result,” says Kristie Lancaster, Ph.D., an associate professor of nutrition at New York University.

This can be a problem, because your body needs a basic roster of vitamins and minerals to run properly. If your regular diet comes up short, you may need a multivitamin to

reach this nutritional baseline. But to actually boost your health, you need to consider moving beyond a multi by folding in some less common elements. Lycopene, for instance, is a powerful antioxidant found in tomatoes. Red yeast rice, a heart-healthy statin. Bottled boosters such as these can be insurance policies for your nutritional blind spots—and if you have specific health concerns, a form of extended coverage.

The right supplements can help your heart, sharpen your immune system, and even improve your sex life. The wrong ones, however, can be ineffective or even harmful. “You run into problems because most

men are ‘prescribing’ these things themselves,” says Tod Cooperman, M.D., president of ConsumerLab.com, an independent tester of health and nutritional products. “Don’t take supplements with abandon. They should be used carefully, because taking in too much of certain nutrients can cause problems.”

We consulted with top doctors, reviewed the latest research, and waded through marketers’ claims to bring you 18 of the best supplements for men. Use our guide—along with advice from your own doc, since many supplements can interact with other medications—to fine-tune your strategy.

## What you're popping

Percentage of supplement side effects caused by taking multivitamins, according to the FDA Health and Diet Survey

# 13.3

## ASPIRIN

**If you're on aspirin therapy, check with your doctor before taking any supplements. For example, pairing aspirin with vitamin E or niacin may increase your risk of stomach bleeding and exacerbate stomach pain, a 2010 review in *Annals of Pharmacotherapy* reports. Aspirin can also worsen side effects from vitamin C, such as nausea and stomach damage.**

# 73%

Percentage of people in the FDA Health and Diet Survey who reported taking any type of dietary supplement

### Starting point The best multivitamin

Don't be fooled by the ingredient overload on multivitamin labels. “Manufacturers may throw in a little something sexy—say, lutein or lycopene—to flesh out the list, but it's rarely enough to be worthwhile,” Cooperman says. Go for a more conservative multi, such as Target Men's Daily Multivitamin or Centrum Ultra Men's Multivitamin. These nail the essentials (shown at right) in case your diet falls short. Of course, ultimately you want to amend your diet so you can ditch the multis altogether.

To learn what all these multivitamin ingredients do for you, go to [MensHealth.com/multivitamin](http://MensHealth.com/multivitamin).

## Weight-loss wonder drugs?

Not a chance. “You can take any combination of weight-loss supplements, but without diet and exercise, you won't manage your weight,” says David Katz, M.D., a Men's Health weight-loss advisor.

Top weight-control supplements, by market share

Alli

# 32%

It offers no weight-loss advantage over diet modification, notes a Durham (NC) VA Medical Center study. Plus, eating more than 15 grams (g) of fat in a meal while on Alli may result in diarrhea.

Hydroxycut

# 15%

An older version was shown by University of Southern California researchers to cause liver damage. No trials have confirmed the safety or effectiveness of the newest blend.

Mega-T

# 3%

Research shows that EGCG, the primary antioxidant in green tea, can boost fat burning, but at doses nearly four times the amount in Mega-T Green Tea.



Turn the page to see the supplements that will make your life better.

**Problem**

**Solution**

**Dose**

**Natural sources**



**Erectile dysfunction**

**KOREAN RED PANAX GINSENG**

Sixty percent of men with erectile dysfunction who took this supplement noticed improvement, according to a 2002 Korean study. The herb may also protect your heart—in a recent Canadian study, a daily dose reduced arterial stiffness.

**900 mg, up to three times a day\***  
*Our pick* Vitamin World Korean Ginseng, 500 mg; vitaminworld.com (\$13/100 capsules)

Korean ginseng root



**High blood pressure**

**COENZYME Q-10**

CoQ-10 can lower your blood pressure while boosting your levels of ecSOD, an enzyme thought to protect blood vessels from damage. CoQ-10 may also improve sperm quality, Italian researchers say. Japanese researchers found it can increase fat burning during exercise.

**30 to 200 mg/day\***  
*Our pick* Carlson Co-Q10, 100 mg; carlsonlabs.com (\$40/90 soft gels)

Meat and fish, eggs, broccoli



**Bone weakness**

**VITAMIN D**

Vitamin D is a hormone that helps your bones absorb calcium. That's a critical benefit, but there's also a steady stream of other compelling reasons to take it, Dr. Cooperman says. For instance, Vitamin D has been linked to reduced levels of depression, reduced risk of colorectal cancer, and less chance of a heart attack.

**1,000 IU Vitamin D/day**  
*Our pick* GNC Vitamin D-3 1000; gnc.com (\$10/180 tablets)

Sunshine, fortified milk



**Heart disease**

**FISH OIL**

Loaded with the essential omega-3 fatty acids EPA and DHA, fish oil can reduce triglycerides, boost HDL cholesterol, and lower blood pressure. But your heart isn't the only beneficiary: The healthy fats may also reduce inflammation and improve cognitive performance, and may lower your risk of colon and prostate cancers.

**At least 500 mg DHA and 500 mg EPA daily**  
*Our pick* Nordic Naturals Ultimate Omega; nordicnaturals.com (\$28/60 soft gels)

Salmon, tuna, or other fatty fish



**Joint pain**

**GLUCOSAMINE**

Glucosamine, a building block of cartilage, can relieve pain and inflammation in joints, says Nicholas DiNubile, M.D., an orthopedic surgeon. In fact, a recent study found glucosamine is more effective than acetaminophen (a.k.a. Tylenol) at relieving symptoms of knee osteoarthritis, often caused in younger men by joint injury.

**1,500 mg glucosamine/day\***  
*Our pick* Puritan's Pride Glucosamine 1,500 mg; puritan.com (\$29/120 caplets)

Crustacean shells



**Injury**

**VITAMIN C**

Sixty percent of adult men don't get enough vitamin C in their diets, according to an *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* study. Vitamin C helps protect your cells from the tissue-damaging free radicals produced by exercise. It also helps heal wounds, and it's key to production of the collagen found in ligaments and tendons.

**Up to 1,000 mg/day in spaced doses**  
*Our pick* Ester-C, 500 mg; cvs.com (\$11/90 tablets)

Citrus fruits, sweet peppers, broccoli, kale, brussels sprouts



**Extra body fat**

**EGCG**

Men who took green-tea extract burned 17 percent more fat after moderate exercise than those taking placebos, according to one study. EGCG, the most active antioxidant in green tea, is thought to prolong exercise-induced boosts in metabolism. It has also been shown to help prevent cancer and can improve heart health.

**890 mg/day green tea extract (containing 340 mg of EGCG)**  
*Our pick* Green Tea EGCG-200; procapslabs.com (\$15/30 capsules)

Green tea



**Prostate-cancer risk**

**LYCOPENE**

Found in tomatoes, this potent antioxidant may reduce your risk of prostate cancer, according to a recent University of Illinois study review. The researchers say it may work by altering hormone metabolism and by causing cancer cells to self-destruct.

**15 to 20 mg/day\***  
*Our pick* Carlson Labs Lycopene (Tomato-Free), 15 mg; carlsonlabs.com (\$50/180)

Fresh or cooked tomatoes, and fruits with red/pink flesh



**Problem**

**Solution**

**Dose**

**Natural sources**



**Migraines**

**MAGNESIUM**

A drop in magnesium can be a major headache. "Blood vessels in your brain constrict, and receptors in the feel-good chemical serotonin malfunction," says Alexander Mauskop, M.D., director of the New York Headache Center. Result: a migraine. The mineral also might help regulate blood pressure and could ward off stroke and diabetes.

**250 mg/day, plus the magnesium in your diet**  
*Our pick* Life Extension Magnesium Citrate, 160 mg; life.org (\$9/100 capsules)

**Diabetes**

**PSYLLIUM HUSK**

This fiber is more than a colon clearer. In a recent Finnish study, the addition of psyllium to meals reduced participants' blood sugar and insulin response. Paired with protein, it was also shown to suppress ghrelin, a hormone that makes you hungry. Psyllium is one of five soluble fibers approved by the FDA for lowering LDL cholesterol.

**20 to 35 g/day, divided and taken with at least 8 oz liquid**  
*Our pick* GNC Natural Brand Colon Pure; gnc.com (\$16/19 oz)

Some fortified cereal grains



**Digestive upset**

**PROBIOTICS**

Probiotics are healthy bacteria that crowd out the disease-causing bad bacteria in your gut. Some can reduce diarrhea caused by certain infections, antibiotics, chemotherapy, and irritable bowel syndrome, Dr. Cooperman notes. The encapsulated good guys may also boost your immune function.

**1 capsule (with at least 1 billion bacteria) a day**  
*Our pick* GNC Natural Brand Acidophilus Probiotic Complex; gnc.com (\$14/100 tablets)

Yogurt, kefir, and other dairy products



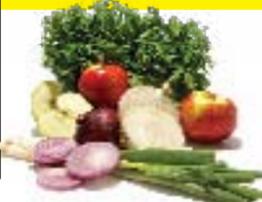
**Low endurance**

**QUERCETIN**

Want to extend your cardio session? People who didn't exercise regularly but took 500 mg of this antioxidant twice a day for a week were able to bicycle 13 percent longer than the placebo group, a University of South Carolina study found. It may help reduce the oxidation of LDL particles and reduce blood-vessel constriction.

**Up to 500 mg, twice a day\***  
*Our pick* Jarrow Formulas Quercetin 500; vitaminexpress.com (\$16/100 capsules)

Red wine, parsley, grapefruit, onions, apples



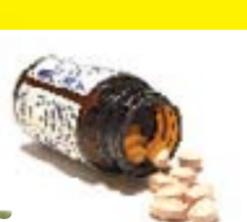
**Poor memory**

**PYCNOGENOL**

This supplement's antioxidants fight free-radical stress in your brain and stop the degradation of nitric oxide, which preserves neural connections. In a recent Australian study, it improved memory in elderly people. Pycnogenol also supports better bloodflow, which helps fight joint pain and reduce muscle cramps.

**150 mg/day\***  
*Our pick* TwinLab Pycnogenol, 50 mg; twinlab.com (\$50/60 capsules)

Pine bark



THOMAS MACDONALD (left styling: Ed Gabriel/Helley Resources; Roger T. Schmidt/Getty Images (red wine); Chris Johnson/Alamy (saw palmetto))

**Cholesterol**

**RED YEAST RICE**

It contains lovastatin—a prescription statin—as well as other compounds that may help manage cholesterol. In a recent *Annals of Internal Medicine* study, patients who took red yeast rice during a 12-week diet and exercise program cut their LDL by 27 percent, compared with 6 percent for those who only dieted and exercised.

**600 mg, 3 times a day\*** (Consult your M.D. if you're on heart meds.)  
*Our pick* Cholestene Red Yeast Rice Dietary Supplement; cholestene.org (\$14/120 capsules)

Red yeast rice, some sake, red rice vinegar



**Cancer risk**

**RESVERATROL**

You can't stop the clock, but you can slow it down. This chemical, found in the skin of grapes, seems to interact directly with genes that regulate aging, says Dr. Katz. Resveratrol has been shown to promote DNA repair in animals, enhance bloodflow to people's brains, and halt the growth of prostate-cancer and colon-cancer cells.

**No dosage recommendations**  
*Our pick* Biotivia Transmax 500 mg Trans-Resveratrol; biotivia.com (\$40/30 capsules)

Red wine, red grape juice



**Depression**

**SAME**

Talk about head-to-toe relief: A synthetic form of a dietary amino acid, SAME has been found to treat depression as effectively as prescription antidepressants, according to Canadian researchers. It has also been shown to reduce joint pain and inflammation, and it may aid cartilage repair.

**600 to 1,600 mg/day, depending on the condition.\***  
*Our pick* GNC SAM-e 400; gnc.com (\$38/30 tablets)

Made in your body, possibly after eating meats, greens, and oranges



**Enlarged prostate**

**SAW PALMETTO**

As you age, your risk rises for benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), a condition that makes you trickle at the toilet. Saw palmetto may help restore the flow. In a recent Korean study, men taking 320 mg of saw palmetto daily saw their BPH symptoms decrease by 50 percent after 1 year.

**320 mg/day\***  
*Our pick* GNC Herbal Plus Standardized Saw Palmetto; gnc.com (\$16/100 softgels)

Saw palmetto berries



**Fallen stars**

Manufacturers regularly unveil new, life-changing supplements that consumers flock to. Then science catches up to the claims. Make sure you move these recent flops from your cabinet to the trash can.

**FLAXSEED OIL**

**Original claim** Lowers cholesterol and fights heart disease.  
**New science** Flaxseed oil's omega-3s are delivered as ALA (alpha linolenic acid), which your body struggles to convert to the usable forms—EPA and DHA. Worse, Australian researchers found that flaxseed oil can increase free radicals in your body, potentially causing inflammation.

**GINGKO BILOBA**

**Original claim** Improves memory and attention.  
**New science** Long-term use of ginkgo biloba was no more effective than a placebo for mental acuity in older people, a recent University of Pittsburgh clinical trial found.

**ST. JOHN'S WORT**

**Original claim** Beats the blues as well as antidepressants do, minus the side effects.  
**New science** Your mood may improve, but potentially at the cost of rendering other prescription meds less effective. Clinical trials show that this herb interferes with roughly 12 classes of drugs, including anti-anxiety meds, statins, and certain antibiotics.

**VALERIAN**

**Original claim** Helps treat insomnia.  
**New science** It's a placebo. According to a new Spanish review, valerian may improve your perceived quality of sleep, but does little to actually enhance it.