



Atlanta Magazine Questions
Peachtree Gynecology

3. Should I take vitamins and supplements? How do I know what to take and if it is safe?

One of the most remarkable areas of advancement in preventive health and wellness is our understanding of the correlation between nutritional supplementation and disease prevention. No one will argue that folic acid supplementation in women attempting pregnancy will decrease certain types of birth defects or that calcium and Vitamin D supplementation will help prevent osteoporosis and resulting fractures. Several large studies have shown that taking a multivitamin may reduce the risk of certain cancers and chronic diseases. Folic acid has been shown to reduce homocysteine levels and high blood pressure in women. The American Heart Association has recommended fish oil supplements to reduce the risk of heart disease. There is overwhelming data from leading academic institutions and scientific journals as to these benefits and many others. More rigorous studies are ongoing, so our knowledge of the safety benefits and risks of various supplements will be updated frequently.

It is important to keep in mind that not all supplements are safe and many may interact with traditional medications. Your healthcare provider should be aware of your supplement use. Furthermore, because of the lack of regulation; product mislabeling and poor quality control is common in nutritional supplements. Pharmaceutical grade products, which undergo rigorous testing to ensure potency, safety, and consistency, are recommended. The suggested supplements one should take are determined by age, general health, and family history. New technology allows specific analysis for vitamins, minerals and micronutrients from a blood sample, so people can tailor their supplementation for their specific deficiencies. As prevention and wellness become more mainstream, patients can partner with their physician to design a total wellness strategy, which will most likely include a few vitamins.