Dr. Weil’s Supplement Recommendations

Here is a general guideline for supplementation (keep in mind that it’s important to work with a doctor to determine your individual needs).

- Basic antioxidant support, including a moderate dose of vitamin C and mixed carotenoids, including beta-carotene, alpha-carotene, and lycopene. Also include vitamin E and the mineral selenium.

- B-complex as part of your multivitamin/multimineral routine.

- It’s important not to take iron unless you have demonstrated anemia, or you are a woman having regular menstrual periods, as it can increase your risk of heart disease and cancer.

- Calcium has been controversial and overprescribed. A safe dose for women is 500–700 ml/day (preferably calcium citrate, which is best absorbed). Men generally shouldn’t take any supplemental calcium.

- Vitamin D is one of the most important micronutrients, and most people need 2,000 IU of vitamin D a day.

- Fish oil has demonstrated great benefits both on physical and mental health. Make sure you include 2–4 grams a day of combined DHA and EPA.

- Anti-inflammatories, including ginger and turmeric. They have tremendous natural benefits in combatting inflammation in the body.

Additional Antioxidant Support

In addition to the antioxidants and minerals that you get from fruits, vegetables, tea, dark chocolate, olive oil, and the multivitamin/multimineral supplements outlined above, there are some additional natural products that can provide additional antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and immune function support. Please note that there is some discord in this area where scientific evidence is deficient. The recommendations below have the most supporting science behind them.

- Coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10) is a natural antioxidant synthesized by the body, found in many foods, and available as a supplement. In addition to acting as an antioxidant, it increases oxygen use at the cellular level, improving the function of heart muscle cells and boosting capacity for aerobic exercise. It is highly researched and widely used, and is most frequently recommended to patients with cancer, diabetes, and gum disease. Note that the widely prescribed statin drugs inhibit the body’s own production of this compound; anyone on a statin should be taking supplemental CoQ10.
• Grape seed extract and pine bark extract are sources of a group of flavonoids called proanthocyanidins, or PCOs. Many practitioners recommend these supplements for the prevention of cardiovascular disease, cataracts, and macular degeneration. If your diet is rich in flavonoids from tea, berries and other fruits, vegetables, and dark chocolate, you may not need this supplement; however, you might consider grape seed for additional antioxidant support if you are not consuming enough dietary sources of flavonoids.

• Alpha-lipoic acid (ALA) decreases insulin resistance while augmenting the body’s antioxidant defenses. If you have any degree of metabolic syndrome (low HDL cholesterol, high serum triglycerides, a tendency to gain weight in the abdomen, a tendency towards high blood pressure) or have a personal or family history of obesity or type 2 diabetes, an ALA supplement could be beneficial.

• Ginger is a powerful, natural anti-inflammatory. While you can add ginger to foods, dried ginger is actually a more powerful anti-inflammatory agent than fresh. Capsules of dried, powdered ginger are sold in health-food stores.

• Turmeric is another potent natural anti-inflammatory agent that may have a specific preventive effect against Alzheimer’s disease. As with ginger, aside from adding it to dishes, you can find turmeric products in health-food stores, but most are preparations of curcumin, which is only one of the active components. It is more beneficial to take a whole extract of turmeric, such as one prepared by the process of “supercritical extraction,” which uses liquefied carbon dioxide as a solvent.

• Astragalus, obtained from the root of Astragalus membranaceus in the pea family, has a long history in Chinese medicine, where it is used to ward off colds and flu. Research confirms the antiviral and immune-enhancing properties of the root. It is plentiful and inexpensive, and is recommended for everything from the common cold to cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy and to those with immune deficiencies. It is also beneficial for healthy people to take through the flu season to remain healthy.

• Immune-enhancing mushrooms include edible species like shiitake, maitake, and oyster mushrooms as well as purely medicinal ones like reishi that are too bitter and woody to be used as food. All are nontoxic and can be used indefinitely as dietary supplements. Research on these mushrooms is extensive, including identification of active compounds, a great many animal studies, and more and more clinical investigations in cases of infectious disease, cancer, and AIDS. It is best to take a number of these mushrooms together because their effects are synergistic. Liquid, powder, and encapsulated forms are available, some providing extracts of seven or more species.
About the Author

Andrew Weil was born in Philadelphia in 1942, received an A.B. degree in biology (botany) from Harvard in 1964 and an M.D. from Harvard Medical School in 1968. After completing a medical internship at Mt. Zion Hospital in San Francisco, he worked a year with the National Institute of Mental Health, then wrote his first book, The Natural Mind. From 1971–75, as a Fellow of the Institute of Current World Affairs, Dr. Weil traveled widely in North and South America and Africa collecting information on drug use in other cultures, medicinal plants, and alternative methods of treating disease. From 1971–84 he was on the research staff of the Harvard Botanical Museum and conducted investigations of medicinal and psychoactive plants.

Dr. Weil is the founder and Director of the University of Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine, where he also holds the Lovell-Jones Endowed Chair in Integrative Rheumatology and is Clinical Professor of Medicine and Professor of Public Health. The Center is the leading effort in the world to develop a comprehensive curriculum in integrative medicine. Graduates serve as directors of integrative medicine programs throughout the United States. Through its Fellowship and Integrative Medicine in Residency curricula, the Center is now training doctors and nurse practitioners around the world.

Dr. Weil is the editorial director of the popular website Dr. Weil.com (www.drweil.com) and is the founder and Chairman of the Weil Foundation. Dr. Weil is also the founder and co-Chairman of Healthy Lifestyle Brands and is a founder and co-owner of the growing group of True Food Kitchen restaurants. He is the author of many scientific and popular articles and of 14 books, the latest release being the cookbook Fast Food, Good Food.