

Supplements, Natural Therapies and Diabetes

Many people living with diabetes use natural health products (NHPs) or supplements along with prescribed diabetes medication. With so much misinformation about these NHPs, it is important to speak to your health care team before starting any supplements or alternative therapies while living with diabetes.



Science says

The Diabetes Canada Clinical Practice Guidelines suggest that complementary and alternative medicine along with conventional medications, may provide some benefit to people living with diabetes. More evidence is needed about the benefits and safety before recommending their use to people living with diabetes.

If you are considering using NHPs, please inform your health care team and be sure to choose NHPs that are properly labelled with a valid natural product number (NPN) to avoid contamination. .

If you are pregnant or hoping to become pregnant, please do not start any supplements or herbal therapies without speaking to a health care professional first.

Special populations

A multivitamin or supplement for certain nutrients may be necessary for some groups, such as:

- pregnant or lactating individuals
- older adults
- vegetarians, vegans
- people following very low-calorie diets
- people following low-carbohydrate diets

If you are in one of these groups, talk to your health care team to determine your needs.

According to the clinical practice guidelines, while the items below have been studied, none have been shown to consistently provide the potential benefits they are advertised for. Check with your health care provider about proper dosage.



Supplement or NHP	Advertised Benefit	Risks
Omega-3s (EPA, ALA)	↓ A1C* Delay onset of T2	• May interact with blood thinner medication
Vitamin D	↓ blood cholesterol ↓ blood pressure	• Dose should not exceed 1000 IU per day unless instructed otherwise by health care team
Magnesium	↓ blood cholesterol ↓ blood pressure	• May cause digestive issues
Fenugreek	↓ A1C*	• Increased risk of hypoglycemia • May interact with medications
Ginger	↓ A1C*	• Increased risk of hypoglycemia • May interact with medications • May cause digestive issues
Berberine	↓ A1C* ↓ blood cholesterol ↓ blood pressure	• May interact with medications • May drop blood pressure • Mild to moderate nausea, diarrhea

*shown to lower glycated hemoglobin (A1C) in people living with type 2 diabetes by at least 0.5% in randomized controlled trials lasting at least 3 months

Supplements and natural therapies should not be used as a replacement for prescribed diabetes medications or lifestyle interventions (ex: healthy eating and exercise).

References: www.guidelines.diabetes.ca, Diabetes and dietary supplements what to know



Visit www.diabetes.ca
for more healthy eating tips and recipes!
1-800-BANTING | info@diabetes.ca

In partnership with:  **novo nordisk®**