Multivitamins are IMPORTANT for ACTIVE LIFESTYLE GOALS

By James Johnson, RCN, CSN, SMA

In today's fast-paced society individuals' typical dietary and lifestyle choices create a need for supplementation. The demands that athletes put on their bodies require them to replenish the lost nutrients and vitamins necessary to maintain good health and to realize optimal performance. As athletes, we put our bodies through vigorous training periods, and so we must always monitor our diets to achieve better workouts and quick recoveries. Unfortunately, our dietary foodstuff choices alone may not supply enough vital nutrients. Daily supplements can be crucial in supplying the high quality, targeted nutrients athletes need to win. Athletes seeking a quality nutritional supplement should look for four key ingredients: antioxidants, digestive enzymes, vitamin-minerals, and phytochemicals. *Antioxidants* are the substances that block or inhibit the destructive oxidation reactions that occur at a cellular level, especially following strenuous training and/or competition. The antioxidant supplement should include vitamin C and E, the minerals selenium, the enzymes catalase and superoxide dismutase (SOD) coenzyme Q10 and amino acids. *Digestive enzymes* break down food particles and nutrients for storage in the liver or muscles, stored energy that the body later converts, by other enzymes, for its use. There are three types of digestive enzymes: (1) *Amylase*, which breaks down carbohydrates; (2) *Protease*, which helps to digest protein; and (3) *Lipase*, which aids in fat digestion.

Vitamins are essential to our health. They assist with our overall health by regulating the metabolism and helping the biochemical processes that release energy from digested food sources. Vitamins are considered to be "micronutrients" because our bodies need them in relatively small quantities compared with nutrients such as carbohydrates, proteins, fats, and water. We also need minerals to compose healthy body fluids and blood, maintain strong bones, sustain healthy nerve functions, and regulate muscle tone, including muscles of the cardiovascular system. Phytochemicals are also critical. They also help athletes reach optimal performance as they supplement our daily intake of proteins, trace and ultra-trace minerals, and phytonutrients.