Supplement Use Is Common Among Children and Adolescents

Although the proportion of US children and adolescents who use a dietary supplement has remained steady at about one-third for the past decade, a growing number now use 2 or more, according to a CDC report. The 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that children’s nutritional needs be met through their diet. But in limited circumstances, supplementation may be recommended. For example, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends vitamin D supplementation for infants who are exclusively breastfed. Research has suggested that the most common reason children use dietary supplements is to improve or maintain health. However, 18% of children take a supplement based on a health professional’s recommendation.

Multivitamin-mineral supplements were the most common type of supplement used, with about one-quarter of youth taking them. About 4% of children and adolescents used vitamin D alone, 3% used vitamin C, 1.8% took a probiotic, and about 1% used melatonin, omega-3 fatty acids, or botanical supplements. Supplement use increased with family income and the head of the household’s educational level. About 40% of Asian and White children and adolescents took supplements compared with about 21% of Black children and about 27% of Hispanic children.

However, the proportion of children who use more than 1 supplement has increased from 4.3% in the 2009-2010 years to 7.1% in the 2017-2018 years. The authors cautioned that using multiple supplements could lead to excessive doses of nutrients because many products contain 100% or more of the daily recommended intake.

“Because dietary supplement use is common, surveillance of dietary supplement use, combined with nutrient intake from diet, will remain an important component of monitoring nutritional intake in children and adolescents to inform clinical practice and dietary recommendations,” the authors wrote.

Pulmonary Fungal Infections Affect Patients With COVID-19

Investigators in Spain and the United States have added 20 new case reports to mounting evidence that patients with coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) are vulnerable to developing pulmonary aspergillosis (CAPA). Older age, hypertension, and pulmonary disease were common among these patients. Systemic or inhaled steroids, often to manage COVID-19–related inflammation, were the most common immunosuppressive agents associated with CAPA. All but 2 of the 20 patients were treated with intravenous antifungal drugs. Three of the patients died.

In their review of the medical literature, the authors found studies suggesting that CAPA affects about 20% to 30% of severely ill, mechanically ventilated patients with COVID-19. Although some studies indicate that antifungal agents may help improve outcomes, the authors noted that larger studies are needed.

Diagnosing pulmonary aspergillosis can be challenging because the fungal species that cause it also harmlessly inhabit the airways. But if primary pulmonary immunity is impaired, spores can grow and cause inflammation in the airways or spread into the lungs. And despite growing awareness of severe influenza’s association with aspergillosis, authors of the case series noted that outside of Europe, many clinicians may not recognize the link. – Bridget M. Kuehn, MSJ

Note: Source references are available through embedded hyperlinks in the article text online.