for a rare bone marrow disease. The effort was worth it. "They gave so much to my recovery," she told USA Today. "Their greeting me each day as though it was a special day ... made me realize how lucky I am."


Shorts

Privatizing B Vitamins

In November 2007, Medicure Pharma Inc. submitted a citizen petition to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), asserting that dietary supplements containing pyridoxal 5'-phosphate (P5P) "are adulterated and are being unlawfully marketed." P5P is vitamin B6’s bioactive form. Medicure, a cardiovascular drug discovery and development company, is working on a new product, MC-1, whose active ingredient is P5P. According to Medicure’s petition, the FDA is supposed to receive notice of any new dietary ingredients 75 days before a product becomes available, but the agency has never received notification of P5P’s use by other manufacturers. "The Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act of 1994 (DSHEA) specifically provides for enforcement action in such situations," the petition states, "to protect the significant investment that companies like Medicure are required to make to gain FDA approval of new drugs."

American Association for Health Freedom is concerned that acceptance of Medicare’s petition will further erode the boundary between patented pharmaceuticals and dietary supplements. Bristol Myers Squibb holds a patent for the use of folate (vitamin B3) to treat Alzheimer’s disease. A particularly effective folate, 5-methyl tetrahydrofolate, is the subject of five patents held by researcher Steven W. Bailey. Bailey sold Merck Eprova rights to some of these patents. Merck sells 5-methyl tetrahydrofolate under the trade name Metafolin.

As of December 1, 2008, Medicare’s petition is still pending; FDA had not yet ruled.


Another Way to Take Magnesium

Transdermal magnesium (absorbed through the skin) is a viable alternative to oral supplements. Magnesium is involved in adenosine triphosphate (ATP) energy production, cardiovascular health, diabetes prevention, pain management, skin integrity, and calming the nervous system. This essential mineral is commonly found in whole grains, dark green vegetables, sea vegetables, nuts, and seafood. People with impaired digestion or who eat mostly processed foods are often magnesium deficient.

One way to raise magnesium levels is to soak in water containing 2 cups of magnesium sulfate (Epsom salts). A University of Birmingham (UK) study found that soaking in a 1 percent solution of Epsom salts for just 12 minutes on 7 consecutive days significantly raised magnesium and free inorganic sulfate blood levels. (Sulfate compounds are used throughout the body.) This study indicates that "most people would find maximal benefit by bathing 2 or 3 times/week, using 500-600 grams Epsom salts [in 60 liters of
That translates to about 2 cups of Epsom salts per 15 gallons of water.

Instead of soaking in a tub of Epsom salt solution, some may choose to apply a teaspoon or so of magnesium chloride (MgCl) to the skin. Mark Sircus, Ac, OMD, has written several articles and a book on transdermal MgCl therapy. This form of magnesium has immunity-stimulating effects when used intravenously, according to research by Dr. Pierre Delbet. Inspired by the clinical observations of Dr. A. Neveu in the 1940s, Delbet determined that MgCl boosts the germ-destroying power of white blood cells. When Delbet gave MgCl intravenously to patients in his clinical practice, he observed that infections and infectious illnesses resolved quickly. Topical MgCl may sting or cause a rash, particularly in children. Sircus recommends washing it off at the first sign of discomfort and diluting it (50/50 with distilled or mineral water) in such cases.

People with impaired kidney function need to use caution with magnesium supplementation because their bodies have difficulty excreting the mineral. Too much magnesium can produce mild and serious adverse effects: flushing, sweating, hypotension, depressed reflexes, flaccid paralysis, hypothermia, and cardiac and CNS depression that leads to respiratory paralysis. Because magnesium can slow an already slow heart rate, people with brachycardia need to supplement with care. Magnesium may also affect dosage of some diabetes medications (Glipizidel and Glyburide) and cause malabsorption of the antiseizure medication Neurontin. Antibiotics like doxycycline, minocycline, and tetracycline hydrochloride tend to be less effective when taken within three hours of magnesium supplementation.

Even when using transdermal magnesium, Sircus says, "It is always a good idea to start with low doses and work one's way gradually to higher doses. Whenever any kind of uncomfortable reaction occurs this is a sign to back the dosage or concentration back down."


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