



International Journal of Home Science

ISSN: 2395-7476
IJHS 2025; 11(2): 862-864
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www.homesciencejournal.com
Received: 25-06-2025
Accepted: 29-07-2025

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Gummy vitamins: A complete analysis

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DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.22271/23957476.2025.v11.i2l.1961>

Abstract

It is a common psychology regarding food that whatever tastes better is preferred, even it is very less or not at all healthy, when given a choice between the one with an appetizing taste and the more bland one. And, when it comes to taking supplements in addition to the diet, one would, without a doubt, go for the appealing one, which, here, are the Gummy Vitamins. These are better in taste, looks and bio-availability. But, not all that glitters is gold. Gummy Vitamins have their pros but their cons outweigh the former. Many of the medical practitioners, specialists, researchers and dietitians do not recommend taking these as these are no less than taking a candy. As per the American Heart Association, the added sugar intake should limit to 9 teaspoons (36 grams) per day for most men and 6 teaspoons (25 grams) per day for most women and children over 2.

The overview of Gummy vitamins, its constituents, pros and cons and why it is not a good choice over traditional vitamins and balanced diets is what this chapter focuses on and highlights.

Keywords: Vitamins, gummy vitamins, sugar alcohols, children, pill fatigue, fat-soluble, traditional vitamins, bioavailability, consumer Lab, AHA

Introduction

Gummy vitamins- yummy or not?

Vitamins are those nutrients that fall under the category of micro-nutrients, along with all of the minerals. Those play their own vital role in constituting an organism and deficiency of any one of them can lead to diseases or disorders. Essential vitamins are synthesized by the body in little to no amount, so, they are required to be obtained through the diet. Vitamins majorly have two types, based on their solubility- Water-soluble Vitamins and Fat-soluble Vitamins. The water-soluble ones are those that dissolve in water and get easily shattered by heat: those cannot be stored in the body and get washed off with urine. Vitamins B-Complex and C fit this description. The Fat-soluble vitamins are the ones that are insoluble in water but dissolve in organic solvents like alcohols. It is known that vitamins are a complex group of nutrients since those are available in little amounts which quantity again, is destroyed by heat (water-soluble ones). People do not like to have most foods in their raw form and tend to cook them until the process goes overboard and destroys all nutrient value of the food item. In order to make up for what benefits are unextractable from the *well-cooked* dishes that wet our appetites, we seek alternative methods wherewith to obtain nourishment: vitamin supplements in the form of pills, capsules and chewables. However, to many, this *other* way is still not the best option.

A gummy vitamin comes as a soft or hard or even chewy nutritional supplement more vitamin-enriched than it is infused with minerals. Those are basically formulated for the children and the elderly, who do not want to take pills and prefer dry supplements over syrups. Gummies are more appealing than run-of-the-mill pills for their diversity in flavors, colors and shapes. The demand for gummy vitamins is rapidly increasing due to the rise in the health-awareness campaign advocating its preventive use, especially post COVID-19 pandemic: the consumer became more health-conscious and sought products and supplements that would help boost immunity. Gummy vitamins consist of the nutrients that help maintain metabolic health and increase glycaemic index and regulate the folic acid count in the human body. Gummy vitamins are also available as probiotics, omegas, a range of specific nutrients, and immune

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support having several vitamins and minerals or few selected nutrients.

What is it made of

Vitamin gummies are made up of many necessary ingredients which give it *that* taste, look, colour and most importantly, the potency and shelf life. The main ingredient is premixed sugar and a gelatin base, which is added to a mixture of vitamins and water. Water and added glucose are also added to it for easy digestion. Next come the artificial flavours and colours relevant to the flavours. In some cases, where the target group is people with diabetes, natural sugar substitutes, like sugar alcohols- gained from berries, are used or other sugar substitutes like citric acid could be added. Sugar alcohols have the same sweetness but half the calories as that of the actual sugars.

Gummy sounds yummy!

As per the latest research, it was inferred that the global gummy vitamin market was evaluated at US\$5.507 billion for the year 2019 and is aimed to grow at a CAGR of 10.81% to reach a market size of US\$11.296 billion by the year 2026. As already discussed, Gummy Vitamins are a chewable source of multi-vitamins and come in a variety of flavours, colours and shapes and sizes. Those are then a desirable source of nourishment. Gummy Vitamins are a viable option for only those whose dietary intake doesn't include enough vitamins. (An adequate amount of vitamins is unlikely to be had through most food items as these are 'micro-nutrients', meaning that they are required by the body in very small amounts.) Those are good for people who cannot, for some reason, take or swallow pills and capsules: those who have (a) certain kind(s) of food restriction, etc. Children are the most fitting target for these squishy nutrient sources for they only reluctantly yield to taking in *necessary* foods because they 'don't like what they look at'. Since this better substitute covers for the same- more or less, nutritive value and wears a much preferable and colourful *coating*, it makes for an ideal surrogate. Another reason why these complement children so well is for reasons of malabsorption, food intolerance, etc, which makes it difficult for the little ones to take proper or relevant foods. The bioavailability of gummy vitamins is another criterion which make them expedient: that those are a broken-down form of the required nutrients and are absorbed by the body more efficiently than the ones from natural vitamin sources or pills.

Many adults suffer from "Pill Fatigue", which refers to a monotonous routine of taking pills that makes a person demotivated to take his/her necessary or required pills or supplements. It could be best described as a will killer for taking the pill. Seeing that one has to take those makes them face 'high pill burden', which might lead them to stop taking and and cause detrimental health issues. Gummy Vitamins are the best replacement for their less-depressing appearance which incentivize people to take those meds.

IT is too sticky

Many adults prefer gummy vitamins because those are easy to consume and are a creative source of multivitamins for them as well as for their children. But, many Dietitians and Health Researchers believe that they are not all that, *there is more to it than meets the eye*. It has been researched that on being assessed, not all but most of these squishy nutrient sources do

not consist of all the vitamins as accounted for, in the label. As per the research, it was seen that some vitamins were just sprayed onto or put a coat of on these sugar candies because it was difficult to balance and fit in the adequate amount of a certain nutrient. While as, some manufacturers add in some extra amounts of vitamins, more than are required so as to make sure that the gummies give out a 100% of the vitamins throughout their shelf-lives as they are not potent enough, which, by the way, is harmful when, in fact it may sound promising. Since the FDA does not test the supplements, there is no certain source of validation as to the amount of the vitamins present in the given nutriment.

Gummy

The base of it is sugar, to which certain relevant vitamins and to some, minerals are added and some additives. As per the findings, the estimation shows that the sugar in these candied vitamins is 7 times more than the traditional vitamins, which makes it an unsuitable recourse for people with diabetes, or those susceptible to becoming obese. Besides, it's abundant sugar composition makes way for oral cavities. It has been found that high sugar intake may also lead to depression and some types of liver diseases too. The gummies, that are "sugar-free", contain sugar alcohols which may cause gastrointestinal troubles for sugar alcohols act as laxatives- causing diarrhoea. Some gummies have citric acid in place of sugar alcohols, which can put a dent on dental care- they wear down the enamel.

About the sweeteners, flavours and colours, those could be red flags. These additives are artificial in nature and are not friendly. Just a few of them are approved by the FDA as general food additives that serve to improve their state and the way those end up tasting. Being sweet, those do attract a lot of consumers. Other than the already mentioned ill consequences of sugar-intake, those may also cause hyper-*vitaminosis*, majorly by ingesting Vitamins A, D, E, K, which are fat-soluble in nature: being such as they are, fat-soluble vitamins, when taken in excess, cannot be released by the body, causing mild issues like nausea, fatigue and muscle weakness to severe problems like any of the vital organs shutting down.

WHO should prefer IT?

Children are largely attracted to nutritional gummies because of the variety that they can pick from: not just colors, but sizes and so many other piquant details. Children are very picky when it comes to eating healthy food and always look for excuses to not take any of those. So, parents or caretakers have to make all eatables convincingly edible to them; they may remould or reshape the original food item(s) into interesting patterns or by adding ancillaries like treats, alongside healthy foods. More problematically children who are required to take additional supplements due to some deficiency, became insufferably stubborn in putting up with or taking down wholesome comestibles. This troubles their parents who become worried for the health of their children. This is where gummy vitamins, as it were, save the day!

For adults, those who have an active lifestyle, these power gummies aid in garnering additional energy, boosting immunity and what not. Also, women, who are in need of additional nutrient supplements (like pregnant women and the ones in the lactating phase and adolescent girls who are anaemic, etc.,) but are inflexible to the idea of having to take

capsules and pills, can take gummies to make up for any such deficiencies. However, most specialists do recommend to turn to chewables before going for the gummies. The impoverished population, which cannot but hardly make two ends meet, cannot afford to mull over the luxury of buying packed food items and/or processed nutrient sources.

When compared to the traditional ones

The traditional nutrient supplements when compared to the gummies, are better in ways that they have more value. Here are enlisted some of the merits and demerits of traditional sources of vitamins:

- a. These are easily absorbed by the body, basically designed as time-release pills.
- b. There are no colour or flavour additives.
- c. The dosages are clearly prescribed.

Now, the demerits:

To some, those could prove to be difficult to swallow.

- a. Those may upset the stomach, if not taken in with food.
- b. These leave a rancid or bland taste to the tongue

The following are some of the strengths of Gummy vitamins:

- a. For a medicine, those are unexacting to take in.
- b. Those come in a variety of flavors, colors and sizes
- c. Those are appealing substitutes to off-putting food items rich in vitamins. And, the demerits:
 - a. Usually contains sugar alcohols, additives, etc., not all of which are accounted for as acceptable, by the FDA.
 - b. Untrue to what the label says, most gummies don't contain the indicated nutritional value except that it may be sprayed over or coated onto the supplements instead of adding in actual adequate amounts of vitamins.
 - c. Being as as they are, gummies may become too irresistible to not eat.

When compared, the pros of the traditional supplements outweigh the pros of gummies whereas in case of the cons, the gummies outweigh the traditional ones, which makes the traditional ones a more preferable choice. However, like all choice else this too is determined by whether the supplement is sought by an elderly person, is to be given to children, is required of deficient people, and so on. Gummy vitamins are a luxury too, given that those variegated goodies come at a price not affordable by many or preferred by all whereas traditional supplements of vitamins, whether or not desirable to look at or taste, are reasonably priced and thus are a favored option.

Conclusion

As per a lot of dietitians, specialists, gummy vitamins should only be taken if there is no other source of getting enough of the required vitamins. It could have been a good choice if it were not for the sugar content, amounting to 3-8 gms per serving. Gummy Vitamins are a good choice for those who, for the aforesaid reasons, cannot take the essential vitamins (and also minerals) through food or even through traditional supplements. They are effective when it comes to providing vitamins to children. Those are also good for adult women and adolescents for issues like hair fall and bone strength, etc. Although gummy vitamins have a greater bio-availability but one thing is evident, traditional chewables outclass gummy vitamins in safety, efficacy and health benefits. As Tod Cooperman, a healthcare researcher and founder of ConsumerLab.com*, put it, "Unless there is no other way to

get a needed nutrient, I would not suggest taking a gummy."

*An independent company that conducts evaluations of dietary supplements.

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