

## Media Release

22 April 2015

### **CMA promotes responsible use of complementary medicines**

Complementary Medicines Australia (CMA) has responded to a study by the University of Colorado, which suggested that there could be potential health risks if supplements are taken in excessive amounts.

The commentary by the University of Colorado cautions consumers that there may be harm in excess, but also points out that if taken at the correct dosage multivitamins can be good for you, and that people need not be afraid of taking vitamins and minerals.<sup>1</sup>

“It should be noted that the comments are not based on any new research, but rather on older studies discussed at an American university forum, which acknowledged that only those who took excessive levels of supplements were found to report negative health effects,” said Mr Carl Gibson, chief executive officer of CMA.

“If you take most things in excess there will be problems. The concern, of course, is that consumers may be misled by the current media headlines in the USA as to the risks of taking vitamins and minerals in sensible, recommended doses.”

“A prime example is the recommendation for women of childbearing age to take 0.5mg of folic acid supplements daily for at least one month before pregnancy and three months into the pregnancy.<sup>2</sup> Research has shown that an adequate intake of folate in the periconceptional period can prevent 70 per cent of cases of neural tube defects, but most women don’t get enough folate. It’s important that reporting is balanced with the public health benefits and does not, for example, discourage those planning pregnancies from taking folic acid.”

“Vitamins and minerals have an excellent history of safety, both in Australia and worldwide. Whilst it’s important to emphasise that vitamins and minerals are not a substitute for a good diet, there are a number of groups of people at risk of nutrient deficiencies. Supplements have a role to play alongside a healthy diet and exercise,” said Mr Gibson.

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<sup>1</sup> Byers T, et al. At The Annual Meeting of the American Association for Cancer Research. 2015.

<sup>2</sup> NHMRC, Accessed 22 April 2015 from:

[https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/files\\_nhmrc/file/nics/material\\_resources/folic\\_acid\\_supplements.pdf](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/files_nhmrc/file/nics/material_resources/folic_acid_supplements.pdf)

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