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Do Vitamin IVs Actually Work? Here's Everything You Need To Know.

The definitive answer on whether vitamin IV treatments are worth it.

What if you could cure a hangover, boost your immune system, fight lethargy, and get healthier skin all in one shot? That's what vitamin IV drips promise. The process works by providing the user with a direct infusion of vitamins and minerals, like high doses of vitamin C or magnesium. Receiving vitamins through an IV allegedly allows the nutrients to bypass the digestive system for a [quicker shot of vitality](#). There are various different formulations of vitamins you can receive depending on your needs.

Fans of the treatment – from Bravo reality stars to [Adele](#) to Chrissy Teigen – and companies that offer the service believe it [helps with a number of health complaints](#). As with most wellness fads, the benefits seem almost too good to be true. I decided to test it out myself and chat with experts on the unconventional practice.

What To Expect When Getting A Vitamin IV

I headed to [Thrive Vitamin Drips & Shots](#) in Laguna Beach, California, to get my IV, but companies across the country offer both in-person and at-home services. At Thrive Vitamin Drips & Shots, you can choose from a range of packages where select vitamins, amino acids and minerals are administered intravenously through a drip while you wait. The whole process takes about 45 minutes or so from start to finish.

You start out by filling in a health questionnaire, which asks you about previous surgeries or illnesses. I then selected the “Classic Myers Drip,” which

included B vitamins, vitamin C, selenium, calcium and magnesium. The combo was inspired by [Dr. John Myers](#), the Baltimore physician who led the charge in intravenously administered vitamins from the 1950s until his death in 1984. After my solution was selected, I was led to a private area where I sat down and put my feet up while a nurse practitioner prepared it.

I am a little squeamish about veins, so I closed my eyes as the nurse set everything up. But once the IV was in place and a piece of tape covered where it entered my body, I relaxed as the neon yellow liquid drained into my arm. Most of us associate having an IV with being in a hospital or being unwell, so it took a moment to remind myself that this was just a treatment and I was actually fine. The distribution of the solution into my body didn't hurt at all but did feel cold under my skin.

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I was the only person in the facility during my visit, but I was told weekends can be very busy. After my treatment, I chatted with LaQuicha Westervelt-House, a nurse practitioner in Orange County, California, and owner of Thrive Vitamin Drips & Shots. She said there's been a rise in popularity of vitamin IVs lately, which she believes is because more people are learning about the reported benefits.

“IV vitamin drips and shots can be used both proactively to maintain optimum wellness and to treat acute and chronic conditions,” Westervelt-House told me, adding that many customers come in for a shot or a vitamin IV to counter the effects of a “rough night out,” for example.

She said the benefits of the treatment include increased energy, enhanced mood, mental clarity, improved sleep, decreased stress and anxiety, increased immunity, muscle recovery and hydration. When asked if people could get the same vitamins (and thus, the same benefits) simply through healthy eating, Westervelt-House said this isn't always possible – especially for those with restricted diets.

“[Vitamin B-12 is only in \[animal\] products](#), therefore vegetarians and vegans need to supplement. Also, many people find it hard to maintain a truly balanced diet,” she said.

Afterward, I drank some water and was sent on my way. I can't say I felt any different either that day or a few days later, but I could tell that the vitamins

had made their way through my body with the evidence of some – ahem – very colorful bathroom visits for days after. (When your body expels excess vitamins that you don't need, it typically [shifts the color of your urine](#). In the case of excess B-2 vitamins, for example, it can result in a highlighter-yellow hue.)

Proponents of IV vitamin drips say the effects are cumulative, so perhaps I would have noticed more benefits if I had returned or taken a course of drips. At Thrive Vitamin Drips & Shots, that amounts to \$480 for a pack of five sessions. For one treatment, it cost \$120. At that price, it's certainly worth weighing up the evidence before making an investment – and not all experts are on board.



What Medical Experts Think About The IV's Effectiveness

Like many alternative treatments, vitamin IV drips do not have a strong body of scientific evidence to back up their health claims. Some services – and their alleged perks – [aren't evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration](#). Rick Pescatore, an emergency physician and the director of clinical research in the Department of Emergency Medicine at [Crozer-Keystone Health System](#) in the Philadelphia area, believes they offer no benefits whatsoever.

“Vitamin infusions for healthy individuals are little more than snake oil,” he said. “There is no data to support their use or literature that they offer any meaningful health benefit. While vitamin supplementation certainly has utility in certain disease processes, ‘health-maintaining’ or ‘rejuvenating’ applications are nothing more than quackery.”

Pescatore added that for many *healthy* individuals, water-soluble vitamins like vitamin C only lead to “expensive urine.” (A study published in the journal [Frontiers in Physiology](#) suggests that in cancer patients with low vitamin levels depleted by chemotherapy, vitamin IV delivery may be beneficial.)

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Dr. Niket Sonpal, a practicing gastroenterologist and hepatologist and associate program director of internal medicine residency at [Brookdale University Hospital Medical Center](#) in Brooklyn, underscored the possible benefits of vitamin IVs for people who are already sick.

He said there are a number of conditions, including celiac disease, where a patient may benefit from a vitamin IV session because they are unable to absorb certain nutrients in the traditional way. However, for the vast majority of the general public, “if you eat a well-balanced diet, your body does not need the extra vitamins,” he stressed.

There’s also a chance your attempt at vitality through vitamin drips could backfire. Like all medical procedures, it does come with a few safety concerns. In 2018, model Kendall Jenner was reportedly [hospitalized after she received a vitamin IV drip](#) and had a bad reaction to it.

Pescatore said people should be cautious about potentially overdosing on vitamins during a session.

“It’s not only silly and ineffective, but it can also be dangerous, consider the life-threatening complications of Vitamin A overdose [if the solution contains that vitamin], the deadly outcomes of elevated potassium or sodium levels, or the [emerging evidence](#) that even oxygen is dangerous when supra-supplemented,” he said. An excess of [vitamin A can be toxic](#) and cause nausea, liver damage or even death.

Any IV treatment also carries a risk of bruising, infection and vein inflammation, which is why Westervelt-House said it's important staff is experienced (only licensed registered nurses are employed at Thrive Vitamin Drips & Shots, she said) and fully trained.

Bottom line: It's important to chat with your doctor before trying any health treatment. And while an IV full of vitamins and minerals may help to quickly revitalize and energize you – at least according to anecdotal evidence – nothing is better (or safer) than a healthy diet and lifestyle.

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