



[www.Vice.com](http://www.Vice.com)

## I Shot Minerals Into My Arm to See if I'd Feel Less Exhausted

I didn't investigate the science behind them before showing up so I could keep an open mind and benefit from any placebo effect.



A recent trip to Ibiza taught me that my mind and body can no longer absorb the sort of punishment I put them through when I was last in the world's most famous party island. That previous trip was 11 years ago. I was 30 years old and, as I remember it, any unpleasant physical or mental effects of eight straight days of partying were both manageable and fleeting. This last time, I went a fraction

as hard for a much shorter duration yet returned home feeling as though I'd done myself irreparable harm. For several days afterward I wept at the slightest provocation, felt physically exhausted, and looked like a wreck.

I was still in this sad and sorry state when I received an email from a PR company in the employ of [Clean Market](#). Clean Market refers to itself as a wellness space that offers a range of services that, collectively, it calls "selfcare 2.0." At their midtown Manhattan location, they have a "thermo-therapy lounge" comprised of an infrared sauna, whole-body cryotherapy, and [cryofacials](#). There's also a bar offering superfood smoothies, power shots, and boosters composed of things like turmeric and chlorophyll, and a market offering other high-end wellness and beauty products. But what they wanted me to check out firsthand was one of their intravenous wellness drips.

The various formulations are from Nutridrip, a company Clean Market has partnered with. Each Nutridrip bag is purported to support a specific aspect of wellness. NutriSkinny, for example, promises to kick start your weight loss with an infusion of "fat mobilizing amino acids" and L-carnitine to help "metabolize carbohydrates to limit fat storage." NutriGlow is marketed to people wanting to improve their hair, skin, and nail health, while NutriBrain is aimed at people who want to improve their memory, concentration, and cognitive ability. What caught my eye was that three of the fourteen concoctions were dedicated to [hangover mitigation](#)—coming in "basic," "super" and "mega" concentrations priced at \$119, \$149, and \$199 respectively. You can even pay a premium and have a NutriDrip "concierge" administer any of the drips or boosters in the comfort of your own home.

Now, under normal circumstances, I would have put intravenous wellness drips in the same category as oxygen bars—a faddish and scientifically dubious way to wring money out of the bored and rich in the 21st Century. But I was ready to try anything to feel human once again, and gamely arranged a time to come to Clean Market in the hopes that it would somehow trigger a return to form. I even avoided investigating the science behind wellness drips before showing up, so as to experience the infusion with an open mind and more fully benefit from any placebo effect. (The company offered its services to me for free.)

I arrived in a clean, sparse space and was directed to the rear of the room to check in for my drip. Two other people were sitting in reclining armchairs hooked up to IV bags placed above their heads. The attendant nurse's demeanor was so familiar and warm that, at first, I assumed these other people were well-known to her. Then she directed that same high-wattage friendliness my way, instantly perking me up.

The nurse gave me a menu and, after a brief chat, recommended that I go with a NutriCleanse drip, NutriDrip's signature dish and most popular offering. The NutriCleanse drip costs \$249. The main ingredients are Vitamin C, Glutathione, and selenium, plus Methyl B12, B-complex 100, magnesium, calcium, and taurine.

After I signed what seemed like a lot of waivers on a tablet, the nurse found an appropriate vein and deftly yet gently hooked me up. I spent the next 45 minutes quietly absorbing the contents of the bag with the nurse ensuring I got the last few precious drops before unplugging me.

“Would you like a booster too?” she asked, handing me a menu. I said I would.

With her guidance, I plumped for the Co-enzyme Q 10 shot for “energy and recovery.” I was led into a private room where I took another needle, this time in my rear. The last thing the nurse administered was a soulful hug. I walked out into the cafe area and treated myself to a smoothie while trying to figure out if I could discern a change in my physical and/or mental state. I convinced myself that, aside from a dull ache in my left ass cheek, I did feel slightly more like my old self.

When I got home I started to look for expert backup for the subtle improvement I was feeling, and began to wonder if the nurse's warm disposition may have accounted for most, if not all of it. There is, after all, a real thing called the **care effect**.

Simply put, there's not a lot of evidence in the scientific literature supporting the efficacy of wellness drips. They're important to treat people who have a diminished ability to absorb vitamins and minerals in their GI tract, but otherwise doctors seem largely skeptical that drips would offer any meaningful benefit.

In a **2009 study** David Katz, director of the Prevention Research Center at Yale University School of Medicine, did find that that intravenous vitamin infusions can have some benefits for people with certain conditions. He demonstrated that intravenous vitamin therapy lessened pain for patients with fibromyalgia, though it bears mentioning that the placebo did too, and the treatment was no more effective than placebo.

“Wellness is a lifestyle, not a quick fix with IVs—no matter what you put in them,” says Brent Bauer, director of Mayo Clinic's complementary and integrative medicine program. Bauer adds that nutrients are best consumed in a healthy

diet, and that all taking them intravenously does is introduce a small but needless risk of infection and electrolyte imbalance.

I spoke with Nutridrip's chief Medical Officer, Shoko Karakilic, about the reluctance of many in the medical community to validate wellness drips. "Wellness drips are complementary medicine," she says, explaining that they are not intended to replace a healthy diet and regular exercise, but rather to "support a healthy lifestyle."

When I ask her why people wouldn't be able to get the nutrients they need from the food they eat, Karakilic says that diseases, medications, food intolerances and sensitivities have had a limiting effect on how much a large and growing number of people can absorb through diet alone. She mentions overuse of antibiotics, ibuprofen, irritable bowel syndrome as well as something called SIBO—small intestinal bacterial overgrowth. "When there's an irritation of the membrane in the stomach and small intestine, those nutrients aren't being optimally absorbed."

New York City-based gastroenterologist **Niket Sonpal** agrees that people with various conditions can be predisposed to malabsorption of nutrients, calling out gluten allergies or Celiac disease in particular. "This is because the antibodies to the gluten cross reacts with the lining of the GI tract, and our body literally attacks the intestines," Sonpal says, adding that this can result in iron deficiency anemia, B12, folate deficiency or even some of the fat soluble vitamins such as Vitamin D. But while Sonpal agrees that SIBO can result in the malabsorption of nutrients, but he doesn't think that IBS would. He stresses that you should see a doctor to see if you have any of these issues prior to trying a wellness drip.

NutriDrip's Karakilic goes on to say that even for the apparent minority of us whose guts aren't in revolt, only 10 to 20 percent of an orally administered vitamin/mineral mix is absorbed, as opposed to upwards of 90 percent of nutrients in an IV bag. It seems that what taking nutrients intravenously *does* do is get the vitamins into the bloodstream more efficiently than when they're absorbed via the GI tract. That's not necessarily better, though could be why I and other wellness drip patients report feeling healthier immediately after treatment. Though of course, this could also be the placebo effect at work.

"Well, you really can't deny the power of the placebo effect," Karakilic says. "However, not only do the vitamins and minerals have a quick onset when administered intravenously, getting the fluid intravenously can make a significant difference to the way people feel." She goes on to say that people

only absorb 10 percent of the fluids they drink—another figure that I'm having trouble trying to substantiate.

Yet despite a dearth of evidence demonstrating that getting an intravenous vitamin infusion is anything other than the universe's way of telling you have too much money, more drip lounges keep popping up and people keep coming back. Bauer's advice is to stick to the basics to get the same effects.

"If you want to promote health and wellness, eat whole foods and emphasize **fruits and vegetables**, **exercise every day**, do a **mind-body practice** every day for at least 30 minutes, stay **connected to friends and family**, honor your **spiritual tradition** and practice **good sleep hygiene**," he says, citing studies that have shown these lifestyle measures—when combined—can improve our genes, reduce the risk of cancer, diabetes, heart disease and Alzheimer's, reduce fatigue, improve productivity and so on. "You will never get that from a bag of nutrients being poured into a vein."

[https://tonic.vice.com/en\\_us/article/nepnwd/i-shot-minerals-into-my-arm-to-see-if-id-feel-less-exhausted](https://tonic.vice.com/en_us/article/nepnwd/i-shot-minerals-into-my-arm-to-see-if-id-feel-less-exhausted)