

The real deal about those personalized vitamins you're seeing everywhere

Necessary or nah? BY ASHLEY MATEO

The Instagramification of healthy things has brought us Kayla Itsines, avocado toast, and now vitamins. But not like regular vitamins. These are cool and customized, and their (really, really pretty) ads are spamming your feed. The brands—such as Persona Nutrition, Baze, and Care/of—promise to pinpoint your v special needs and suggest a supplement routine. Persona and Care/of, for example, ask you to take a five-minute online quiz to analyze your diet and lifestyle. Then an algorithm spits out a rec for a Portrait-mode-ready pill pack. (Baze takes it one step further by offering a mail-order

finger-prick blood test instead of a questionnaire.) Depending on how many supps you subscribe to, you could spend, on average, between \$7 and \$60 per month.

The serious marketing strategy—and cost—imply the science behind this stuff is solid, but some people with actual medical degrees aren't *quite* as sure....

Hold up: Can a quiz really know what I need?

Listen, we love us a Q&A. And some of these vitamin surveys are backed by research. Graham Rigby, the head of innovation at Care/of, says the company "reviews the latest clinical science to recommend products." Persona uses data from "peer-reviewed nutrition journals" to create its algorithm, says cofounder Tamara Bernadot. But a quiz just

isn't as accurate as any doctor-certified test, says Alka Gupta, MD, codirector of Integrative Health and Well-Being at New York-Presbyterian and Weill Cornell Medicine.

Okay, but a finger-prick blood test? Sounds like some sketchy shit.

Actually, Baze's test, which collects the equivalent of four drops of blood, is (mostly) valid but not a hundred percent foolproof, says Elizabeth Bradley, MD, medical director for Functional Medicine at the Cleveland Clinic. These blood scans aren't standardized by any official group though, so it's possible some are more accurate than others. And any altitude or temp changes that happen as samples are mailed back could affect your results.

So personalized vitamins are helpful?

Um, they maybe are? Since everyone has different nutritional

needs, the customized concept is legit, says Dr. Gupta. But like any supplement, these vitamins aren't approved by the FDA. Meaning: Few outside groups are testing what's in 'em, and they don't require clinical trials to prove they work. FWIW, a recent study published in the *Annals of Medicine* found that people who did not take any supps were no more likely to die in general than those who popped pills on the reg. Researchers also agree that real food > nutrients in supplement form, always.

IF ONLY

A pill could make our life as pretty and organized as a vitamin ad.

THE VERDICT

There's no harm in trying a personalized vitamin regimen. In theory, it could make you feel better (and won't hurt). If you're cool shelling out the cash, you do you, boo.