

Sale and supply of Bariatric supplements in NZ – Information for consumers

Medsafe has become aware that some of the bariatric multivitamins available in New Zealand do not comply with 2 types of legislation:

- Dietary Supplements Regulations 1985
- Medicines Act 1981

As a result, some of the bariatric multivitamins are not currently available to buy in NZ. This does not mean that the multivitamin you may have been taking is unsafe. People who have had bariatric surgery need higher doses of some nutrients than the general population. Bariatric multivitamins have been developed using evidence based guidelines to prevent nutrient deficiencies after surgery. This means bariatric multivitamins often have higher amounts nutrients and sometimes they exceed the amounts allowed for general sale within New Zealand.

Whilst it is our desire to advise best practice, we are currently bound by legislation. We are working hard to try a find a solution.

What are your options?

- We do not recommend the multivitamin (Mvite) which is available on prescription. It is not suitable for someone after bariatric surgery because it does not contain all of the nutrients you need.
- You may be able to directly import your multivitamin (for yourself / whānau use) from an overseas supplier. This type of purchase can be done online from a website located in Australia or elsewhere and is legally acceptable as long as the product does not contain prescription levels of some of the vitamins / minerals.
- Talk to your GP or your bariatric service if you are unsure what to do. Or contact your dietitian, they will be able to help you choose a suitable multivitamin.
- If you have had a gastric bypass (roux en Y / mini / single anastomosis) or a duodenal switch, please contact your dietitian as your micronutrient requirements are higher.
- If you are not able to take your regular bariatric multivitamin, we recommend having your nutritional blood test done every 6 months instead of every 12 months.
- Please contact your GP or dietitian if you develop any of the following symptoms:
 - reduced energy
 - reduced mental clarity (brain fog)
 - loss of balance
 - eye changes / changes in vision

These symptoms can be a sign of Vitamin B1 (thiamine) deficiency. This can happen after about 3 weeks of inadequate intake or inadequate supplementation. Other nutrients usually take longer for a deficiency to emerge.