

From better sleep to boosting your joints and heart, our experts chew over the new vitamins with 'benefits'

By **CAROLINE JONES**

GUMMY supplements are a popular way to dose up on health-boosting ingredients — and they're not just for children, with some promising to help adults with everything from troublesome sleep to weight loss.

There is no doubt they taste better than most standard supplements, but be wary of overdoing the doses by eating them like sweets. Some are packed with sugar and others contain sweeteners such as maltitol, mannitol and sorbitol, which can cause side-effects including tummy pain and diarrhoea in some people.

So are they any good? Here, Dr Lindsay Kass, a sports and nutrition scientist at Hertfordshire University, and Aidan Goggins, a London-based pharmacist and independent adviser to the supplement industry, assessed some of the latest products. We then rated them.

GUT HEALTH

Nature's Way Fortify Probiotic gummies, £24.99 for 60, hollandandbarrett.com

COST PER DAILY DOSE: 83p

CLAIM: Each daily serving (two gummies) of these berry-flavoured jellies contains six billion 'live cultures' of the *Bacillus coagulans* bacterium, which the maker says supports digestive health. They are also free from sugar, dairy and gluten.

EXPERT VERDICT: 'This product holds up to scrutiny,' says Aidan Goggins. 'Normally, chewable probiotics should be avoided as the manufacturing process involved in compressing them into shape — which includes high pressure and heat — destroys the live bacteria before you even put it into your mouth.'

'However, *Bacillus coagulans* is much more resistant to high temperatures and harsh environmental conditions, including stomach acid. There is increasing evidence that taking such a supplement can improve digestive health and reduce stomach infections. This gummy may even be more beneficial than products using the more commonplace *Lactobacillus* bacteria strains [such as *acidophilus* or *Bifidobacterium bifidum*].' **9/10**

BETTER SLEEP

Wicked Gummy Co Peaceful Zzzzzz gummies, £23.99 for 60, wickedgummyco.com

COST PER DAILY DOSE: 80p

CLAIM: The maker says these passion fruit-flavoured gummies 'provide peaceful sleep' by helping to 'increase serotonin levels'. They contain 5-HTP, the amino acid theanine, vitamin B6, chamomile and lemon balm. Take two daily.

EXPERT VERDICT: 'Studies support the role of theanine in reducing stress, helping to prepare the body and mind for sleep and improving sleep quality,' says Aidan Goggins. 'However, a minimum of 200mg is needed to have this benefit and this product provides one tenth of that.'

'Similarly, it only provides 20mg of 5-HTP — an amino acid from food that our body turns into the "happy hormone" serotonin, which helps regulate sleep — and yet studies show a dose of at least 50mg and up to 300mg is needed.'

'I doubt this gummy will have a large effect on serotonin production or sleep. They're also quite high in sugar and a two-gummy serving adds 20 calories.' **4/10**

WEIGHT LOSS

New Nordic Apple Cider Gummies, £18 for 60, boots.com

COST PER DAILY DOSE: 60p

CLAIM: The apple cider vinegar in this gummy has been freeze-dried



Pictures: GETTY / E+

Can gummy sweets improve your health?

into a fine powder, which the maker says 'helps break down fats in the digestive system'. Take two daily.

EXPERT VERDICT: 'Any diet benefits of apple cider vinegar are thought to come from its acetic acid content, which works in the gut to slow the rate at which we absorb food,' says Aidan Goggins.

'This is the same way prescription weight-loss medication works. Small human studies suggest this mechanism could help with weight loss, but more research is needed — and it certainly won't break down fat as suggested here.'

'To get the 1.5g of acetic acid in a standard 30ml therapeutic dose of apple cider vinegar, you would need about 60 gummies per day — a whole tub, costing £18 and adding 360 calories to your diet.'

'You could add one teaspoon of normal vinegar to your food for the same effect.' **3/10**

HEART BOOST

Wonder Cod Liver Oil Gummies, £9.99 for 60, wonderhealth.co.uk

COST PER DAILY DOSE: 17p

CLAIM: This is the world's first fruit-flavoured cod liver oil gummy, says the maker. These contain omega-3 and vitamins A and D, which 'help boost your immune system and keep your heart healthy'. Take one per day.

EXPERT VERDICT: 'It's recommended that we get around 450mg of omega-3 fats in our diet each day, but unless you eat at least one portion of oily fish, such as salmon, per week, you won't be achieving that; figures show two-thirds of us don't manage this,' says Lindsay Kass.

'These fats have proven benefits for protecting the heart, and a therapeutic dose is between 400mg and 1,000mg, so you get plenty in this gummy in the form of cod liver oil.'

'There is no evidence a gummy

would have any added benefits over capsules or the liquid form of cod liver oil. However, they may be beneficial for those who struggle to swallow capsules or who hate the taste of the liquid.' **7/10**

FOR CHILDREN

Nourished Kids, £27.99 for 30 gummies, get-nourished.com

COST PER DAILY DOSE: 93p

CLAIM: A personalised, sugar-free vitamin 'stack' of 11 nutrients, vitamins and minerals, based on an online quiz of your child's eating habits. The maker claims this will 'nourish them faster and more efficiently'. Requires a monthly subscription. Take one a day.

EXPERT VERDICT: Aidan Goggins says: 'Here, 3D printing allows different amounts of nutrients to be added to create a "bespoke" vitamin. However, I'm concerned

there is no real understanding of nutrition or proper tailoring in this product.'

When I tested it for a ten-year-old girl, it simply recommended set amounts for adults. It also didn't contain the recommended 400IU [international units] of vitamin D. In my view, this is just a bit of a gimmick. Save your money and buy a simple multivitamin tablet or liquid. Pharmacy and supermarket own-brands are great budget options, and contain all the key nutrients a child needs.' **2/10**

JOINT SUPPORT

Fight Support Bone Strength gummies, £16.99 for 60, amazon.co.uk

COST PER DAILY DOSE: 57p

CLAIM: These berry-flavoured gummies contain vitamin D, calcium and phosphorus, which the maker says can help support healthy bones and joints. Take two a day.

EXPERT VERDICT: 'Vitamin D, calcium and phosphorus are important nutrients for strong, healthy bones,' says Lindsay Kass.

'A review in *The Lancet* in 2007 found that supplementing over-50s with 1,200mg calcium and 800IU of vitamin D could prevent bone loss and fractures.'

'However, the recommended two gummies per day here would only provide around a quarter of that amount, so is unlikely to have a strong benefit for your bones. You would be better off with a higher-dose tablet.' **4/10**

STRESS RELIEF

Natural Vitality Calm Anti-stress gummies, £14.03 for 120, uk.iherb.com

COST PER DAILY DOSE: 47p

CLAIM: In raspberry and lemon flavours, these gummies promise to restore healthy magnesium levels depleted by stress, and 'bring on a whole-body feeling of calm', says the maker. You take four a day.

EXPERT VERDICT: 'Magnesium is essential for many functions in the body — it helps reduce muscle cramps, aids sleep and is linked to lower anxiety levels as it works to reduce levels of the stress hormone cortisol,' says Lindsay Kass.

'The magnesium citrate is a good source of absorbable magnesium, but you need the four gummies as recommended in order to reach your daily intake of 330mg.'

'There are no studies that show magnesium is better absorbed as a gummy than as a tablet. These also contain a fair amount of sugar and 28 calories per serving.' **6/10**

HOT FLUSHES

Menopause gummies, £19.67 for 42, lesmiraculeux.eu

COST PER DAILY DOSE: 94p

CLAIM: Containing herbs kudzu and black cohosh, these apple and black-currant-flavoured gummies promise to provide 'effective relief from hot flushes, fatigue, night sweats and mood swings.' Take two daily.

EXPERT VERDICT: 'There is very little scientific evidence for the benefits of kudzu for easing menopausal symptoms, and there aren't enough robust studies on black cohosh to conclusively prove it helps — although some women do swear by it,' says Lindsay Kass.

'However, there's no harm in trying herbal remedies and seeing if they help. The dose of herbs in these gummies is similar to comparable tablets.' **5/10**

THERE IS EVEN A 'CANNABIS' SWEETIE...

Starpowa Premium CBD 5mg gummies, £39.99 for 60, hollandandbarrett.com

COST PER DAILY DOSE: £1.33

CLAIM: These apple-flavoured gummies are an 'easy way to enjoy CBD', says the maker. Take two daily, which will provide 5mg CBD oil.

EXPERT VERDICT: 'CBD or cannabidiol oil, which comes from the hemp plant, has surged in popularity in the past few years, with claims it can help improve pain, glaucoma and anxiety,' says Aidan Goggins. 'But the evidence is not there yet to support widespread use of CBD,

including its safety. Recently, an otherwise healthy 56-year-old man was admitted to intensive care after eating two packets of CBD gummies [these were a different brand], suffering from vomiting, slurred speech and low oxygen levels.'

'He made a full recovery, but it's also worth noting that research suggests only 31 per cent of CBD products contain the claimed amount of CBD. This product seems to contain a reasonable dose and is sugar-free — but is expensive.' **2/10**

