# **ARTICLE**

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# **Systematized Review of the Effect of Supplementation on Glycemi[c](https://doi.org/10.52868/RR/2022-3-1-1)  Control in Type 1 Diabetes**

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#### **Abstract**

Despite the rise in the number of diabetics, studies on nutritional supplementation to help improve glycemic control type 1 diabetes can often be lacking. This review systematically collated research on the supplementation of glutamine, vitamin D, and magnesium to analyze what is currently known and what gaps in research can be filled. It was found that glutamine research is severely lacking but shows promise as a supplement to aid in glycemic control. Deficiencies in Vitamin D and magnesium show some relationship to poor glycemic control with some mixed results for supplementation beyond repletion. Data outside of the target population shows that all three supplements show potential promise in maintaining βcell health in those with residual β-cells. In conclusion, glutamine and magnesium show the most value in improving glycemic control, but the mechanisms behind this are not known. More research is needed in this field to confirm and strengthen assumptions.

**Key words :-** • "type 1 diabetes", "t1d", "type 1", "diabetes mellitus type 1", "diabetes mellitus" •"supplementary nutrition","supplement" •"vitamin D", "cholecalciferol", "ergocalciferol", "vitamin D3", "vitamin D2"• "magnesium", "Mg" •"glutamine", "glutamate", "Gln", "Q" • "glycemic variability", "glycemic control", "glycemic", "glycemia"

#### **1 INTRODUCTION**

Super 1 Diabetes (T1D) is a chronic disease<br>that manifests because of autoimmune<br>onslaught on  $\beta$ -cells within the pancreas<br>leading to a stark decline of endogenous insulin **T** ype 1 Diabetes (T1D) is a chronic disease that manifests because of autoimmune onslaught on β-cells within the pancreas production and subsequent reliance on exogenous insulin to preserve life [1-3]. The dysfunction of the endoplasmic reticulum (ER) of β-cells is considered a marker for T1D autoimmune onslaught and development [2-3]. As cellular stress induced fragility of the ER membrane leads to subsequent dysfunction and therefore decline of endogenous insulin production, preserving β-cell ER membrane integrity may be a potential method of increasing

glycemic control in newly diagnosed diabetics or those with latent function [3-4]. Individuals with persistent β-cell function have been shown to have better glycemic control with less incidents of lifethreatening or severe hypoglycemic episodes [4].

#### **Glycemic Control**

Improving glycemic control is paramount to the health of those with T1D whether it be through preservation of β-cell function or otherwise. Glycated hemoglobin (HbA1c) is a widely used measure of glycemic control as it can reveal a biological blood sugar average over the course of the lifespan of a blood cell—about three months [5]. Individual measurements of HbA1c have been

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of questionable value [6-7]. Single-measurement HbA1c has a tendency for inaccuracy regarding actual blood sugar averages with it commonly being either under-or overestimated [6]. In addition, HbA1c alone is a weak reflection of a patient's history of or tendency towards hypoglycemia which is acutely dangerous [4,7].

However,despite the relative unreliability associated with single-point measurements of HbA1c,maintaining measures of it are of paramount importance due to it being of immense value for measuring glycemic variability [8-9]. Glycemic variability (GV) is a compilation of data points of HbA1c measures or, in the case of continuous glucose monitoring(CGM), blood glucose measures to track glycemic trends more accurately than single-point measures [8-9].Poor glycemic control is typically defined as higher HbA1c and GV [8-9].Frequent measurements of HbA1c have been associated with lower odds of complications (OR 0.64,0.43-0.97)as wellas glycemic improvements [9]. Higher HbA1c and GV is linked to a higher risk for cardiovascular complications such as cardiovascular disease and cardiac autoimmunity as well as overall mortality [10-11]. Glycemic control also has an impact on brain function with cognitive dysfunction being relatively common among those with poor glycemic control [12].

# **T1D Statistics**

Approximately 1.3 million people in the United States are reported to have T1D [13]. The prevalence of the disease has been increasing, especially in racial minorities, those of lower socioeconomic status, and individuals with SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) infection in the past thirty days [14-17]. While incidence of the disease decreases after the age of 14, the overall incidence rate has been increasing yearly with an almost 2% increase annually from 2002 to 2015 [18-19].

This review aims to address how different supplemental nutrients such as glutamine, vitamin D, and magnesium affect glycemic control in T1D. The reviewed interventions involve supplementary nutrition consisting of glutamine, vitamin D, and/or magnesium with the main outcome being glycemic

control. Glycemic control, which is measured via HbA1c and, when available, HbA1c variability. Included analysis has measurements made prior to intervention initiation and at least once again at a time span of at least 3 months after initial intervention.

Additional outcomes include key nutrient status, other health markers, and patient satisfaction. Nutrition status would vary per intervention but would consist of any change in serum amount of the nutrient of focus. Measurements of additional outcomes would follow the same or similar time span and frequency of glycemic control measurements.Health markers such as lipid levels are also noted, when applicable and available.

Subgroups are defined by different supplement types utilized, namely glutamine, vitamin D, and magnesium. This review aims to compile available literature to explain how each subgroups affect glycemic control. Each subgroup will conform to the previously recorded investigation methods with some specific changes. Glutamine analysis will also investigate upstream and downstream substrates such as glutamate to glean a better understanding of how it affects glycemic control. Vitamin D analysis and magnesium analysis will more deeply consider the starting nutrition status of the patients involved by demarcating deficiency status. Studies will also be differentiated on the base of dosage, dosage scaling over time, and dosage amount.

# **2 | METHODS**

## **Protocol and Registration**

This systematic review's registration ID is CRD42022313368. The PRISMA 2020 Checklist was used to formulate this review and to help analyze data.

## **Search Strategy**

The review utilized PubMed, Ovid, EBSCO (Academic Search Complete), MEDLINE, and EMBASE to compile research data. The search was restricted to English language and the year span of 2010-2022. Due to the sparse information, modifiers were used liberally or not at all to broaden

the scope of the search. Additionally, the searches were re-run prior to final analysis. Key words used included the following:

• "type 1 diabetes", "t1d", "type 1", "diabetes mellitus type 1", "diabetes mellitus"

• "supplementary nutrition", "supplement"

• "vitamin D", "cholecalciferol", "ergocalciferol", "vitamin D3", "vitamin D2"

•"magnesium", "Mg"

•"glutamine", "glutamate", "Gln", "Q"

•"glycemic variability", "glycemic control", "glycemic", "glycemia"

# **Eligibility Criteria**

The main study types included were randomized controlled trials as they determined the effectiveness of each intervention. Cohort studies were included if they could determine the long-term effect and feasibility of an intervention. Case-control studies were used to supplement the review with additional analysis of cellular mechanisms and dynamics that may be unique in the disease of interest. Qualitative studies were also used to supplement the review by providing information on whether an intervention is practical.

Studies were included in the main analysis if the patients had T1D and no notable comorbid diseases that would affect nutrient dynamics except for vitamin deficiencies or processes associated with the disease of focus. Studies were not setting restricted, but the focus was preferentially in an out-patient context. The main outcomes of included studies measured glycemic control via HbA1c and GV. For the main analysis, those without T1D were excluded. Additional research data outside of the main scope of research—for example, involving those without diabetes—was included to enhance the information derived from directly applicable research. Since the data for specific supplements concerning T1D can be relatively sparse, this additional data is meant to expand upon the mechanisms behind what is available as well as offer additional insight into where the future of T1D nutritional supplement research can go.

## **Data Extraction and Quality Assessment**

Data extraction was completed via Excel© spreadsheet with guidance from the Cochrane Consumers & Communications Review Group Data Extraction template [20]. Data sources were compiled for analysis from the aforementioned research databases. Information analysis included study type, study size, blinding, randomization methods, nutrition deficiency status of participants, frequency of data gathering, HbA1c levels, nutrition status, length of time since diagnosis of T1D, and relevant health history. Purpose was established for each extracted study to ensure the aims matched what the review is intended to cover. The description of the methods, sample group, and study design were compiled to ensure that the studies had adequate power or were otherwise statistically valid. The results were similarly parsed to ensure statistical validity of the research as well as how it may tie into the review's scope. Quality of data was ensured by a combination of risk assessment and determining statistical validity.

The data extracted generally set statistical significance at  $p \le 0.05$  and/or were within 95% confidence intervals. While many studies were blinded, few were explicitly double-blinded. Some were not blinded at all. Research studies were run through a risk of bias assessment and checked for quality. Figure 1 shows the process through which articles were systematically identified, screened, and reviewed.



**Figure 1. PRISMA Diagram**

## **3 | RESULTS**

#### **Glutamine Supplementation**

Nocturnal hypoglycemia significantly increased with glutamine supplementation ( $p=0.03$ ;  $p=0.045$ ) in adolescents post-exercise [21-22]. One study noted the mechanism behind the hypoglycemia was not significantly associated ( $p=0.4$ ) to alterations in insulin sensitivity [22]. These studies indicate that glutamine supplementation in T1D patients reduces blood glucose levels but not by increasing insulin sensitivity.

#### *Table 1. Glutamine Studies in T1D Data Extraction*



#### **Supplementary Information**

Glutamine supplementation in non-diabetic patients has been shown to significantly attenuate the rise of blood sugar (p=0.007) after consuming a carbohydrate-dense nutritional drink as well as generally slow gastric emptying [23]. However, in type 2 diabetics (T2D), neither insulin secretion nor postprandial glycemic control was significantly improved by glutamine supplementation [24]. Glutamate—an amino acid tied to glutamine in a biological cycle—attenuated  $(p<0.05)$  rises in blood glucose when carbohydrates were taken in combination with glutamate [25-27]. The glutamate-glutamine cycle is an important aspect of neurotransmission within glutamatergic and GAGAergic neurons [26-27].

Glutamine has also been found to affect the immune system with being stimulated to increase lymphocyte count in anorexic and inflammatory response syndrome patients [28-29]. Glutamine supplementation also has been shown to suppress inflammatory response by decreasing T-cell leukocytes (p<0.05) and killer cell  $(p<0.01)$  count in patients with inflammatory response syndrome [29]. Studies on how glutamine affects cells find that glutamine supplementation promotes proliferation of cells while preventing ER stress-induced apoptosis [30-31]. The research suggests glutamine supplementation might attenuate both inflammatory response and inflammation induced ER membrane stress associated with autoimmune conditions such as T1D.

# *Table 2. Glutamine Studies Outside of T1D Data Extraction*



## **Vitamin D Supplementation**

Results on Vitamin D supplementation in patients with T1D tends to be relatively mixed but deficiency in Vitamin D was found to be common in most studies [32-37]. A study of 194 children did not find a significant relationship (p=0.057) between HbA1c and Vitamin D levels despite extensive statistical analysis and both bivariate and multivariate modeling [32]. In an investigation of the supplementation of Vitamin D in both T1D and T2D patients, the study found while Vitamin D effectively decreased HbA1c in T2D patients, the supplement had no significant  $(p=0.52)$  decrease in T1D patients [35]. However, the power analysis for this study found the T1D branch was low (7.5% for 88 patients) power while the T2D branch was high (60.4% for 37 patients) power [35]. Repletion of Vitamin D with 20000 UI/week for 6 months in a largely Hispanic and female group did not result in significant changes in either glycemic control ( $p=0.96$ ) or IL-6 ( $p=0.85$ ) inflammatory marker levels [37].

In a nonblinded, nonrandomized study with 80 patients, supplementation to replete deficiency was found to lower HbA1c after a 12-week intervention (r=-0.4, p=.001) with univariate and linear analysis of data done [33]. Another study—double-blinded with 39 patients, high doses of Vitamin D (4000 IU/d were found to be effective in lowering both HbA1c ( $p<0.001$ ) and usage of exogenous insulin (p=0.003-0.039) with increases in serum Vitamin D (p=0.003) and regulatory T-cells (p=0.017) occurring more strongly in male participants [38]. In another case, Vitamin D supplementation significantly  $(p<0.0001)$  improved glycemic control in children [34].

Beyond supplementation, different levels of Vitamin D deficiency were correlated to different levels of glycemic control with multivariate regression showing a significant  $(p<0.01)$  link between serum levels of Vitamin D and HbA1c level [36]. In a similar vein, interleukin-6 (IL-6) was seen to be significantly higher (p=.026) in those deficient in Vitamin D [37]. When paired with saxagliptin, supplementation might help preserve β-cell function in latent autoimmune diabetes in adults—also known as LADA [39]. Vitamin D seems to be vitally linked to maintaining a healthy baseline levels of IL-6 and glycemia [36-37].

*Table 3. Vitamin D Studies in T1D Data Extraction*



#### **Supplementary Information**

Key markers of inflammation ( $p=0.19$ ) or glycemic control ( $p=0.46$ ) did not improve in 6 months with highdose supplementation of Vitamin D [40]. However, supplementation is generally found to significantly decrease insulin resistance ( $p<0.001$ ) and thereby improving insulin sensitivity [41-43]. This is linked to decreasing diabetes risk in prediabetics who are deficient in Vitamin D [42]. Supplementation additionally was found to lower fasting blood sugar  $(p<0.001)$ , fasting insulin  $(p<0.001)$ , inflammatory markers  $(p<0.001)$ , and beta cell output ( $p=0.03$ ) in healthy obese or overweight patients [41]. Along with improving insulin sensitivity ( $p=0.05$ ), glycemic control ( $p=0.002$ ), and oxidative stress ( $p=0.04$ ) were improved compared to the control in elderly patients at 6 months [43]. This research generally concludes Vitamin D

supplementation, especially to replenish deficiency, is beneficial to improve general health.

#### *Table 4. Vitamin D Studies outside T1D Data Extraction*



#### **Magnesium Supplementation**

No correlation was noted between levels of serum magnesium and HbA1c ( $r=0.014$ ,  $p=0.843$ ) in a prospective cohort study [44]. However, other studies contradict this prospective study's findings. Low serum magnesium was linked to poor glycemic control (p=0.002) with low magnesium being common in those with poor control [45-46]. There was a significantly negative correlation (adjusted r  $(2) = 0.172$ , p=0.004; r=-0.625, p<0.001) between magnesium and HbA1c [45-46]. Potential health complications such as BMI ( $r=-0.197$ ,  $p=0.04$ ), triglyceride levels ( $p<0.001$ ), total cholesterol ( $p<0.001$ ), low-density lipoprotein

(LDL) ( $p<0.001$ ), and duration of diabetes ( $p<0.001$ ) are also negatively correlated with HbA1c and magnesium levels [46-47]. Repletion of magnesium deficiency has been shown to improve both glycemic control ( $p<0.001$ ) and lipid profile in children ( $p<0.001$ ) [48]. In general, low magnesium levels are linked to poor glycemic outcomes as well as decreased overall health quality as measured by key health indicators such as cholesterol.

#### *Table 5. Magnesium Studies in T1D Data Extraction*



#### **Supplementary Information**

Non-diabetic metabolic syndrome patients with normal serum magnesium levels experienced an increase  $(p=0.003)$  in serum Vitamin D as well as a decrease  $(p=0.0036)$  in HbA1c [49]. This finding was supported in other studies which found magnesium supplementation decreased insulin resistance (p=0.049) and cholesterol levels (p=0.006) compared to placebo [50-51].

Magnesium has a distinct effect on cells with extracellular magnesium being seen to inhibit ( $p \le 0.05$ ) membrane fusion by modulating oxidative stress [52]. In magnesium deficient patients without hypertension, supplementation led to improved (p<0.00005) β-cell function and better biological handling (p<0.005) of

insulin sensitivity variations as measured by the Belfiore index [53]. Supplementation is linked to a decrease in oxidative stress by preventing uptake of SO4- uptake  $(p<0.01$  to  $p<0.001$ ) through competitive binding [54]. Through these cellular mechanisms, magnesium is shown to affect cellular metabolism and therefore affect glycemic control.

#### *Table 6. Vitamin D Studies outside T1D Data Extraction*



#### **GLYCEMIC CONTROL IN TYPE 1 DIABETES**

#### *Table 7. Other Relevant Studies Data Extraction*



<span id="page-10-0"></span>Risk of bias was assessed following the Risk of Bias assessment template developed by the Cochrane Consumers & Communication Review Group [20]. This assessment was adapted from Table 8.5.c in chapter 8 of the Cochrane Handbook [20]. This is a reflection of data quality outside of statistics and, in particular to research directly applicable to T1D, reflects the quality of the diabetes supplement research found for this review. Risk was often unclear and high risk was often associated with blinding, randomization, and allocation concealment. Low risk was most often associated with outcome data and reporting. Table 8 shows the risk of bias assessments.

#### *Table 8. Risk of Bias Assessment*







#### **Glutamine - Type 1 Diabetes Information** Mauras, N., Xing, D., Fox, L. A., Englert, K., & Darmaun, D. (2010). Effects of glutamine on glycemic control during and after exercise in adole scents with type 1 diabetes: a pil ot study. Diabetes care, 33(9), 1951-1953. https://doi.org/10.2337/dc10-0275 Low Risk Low Risk Low Risk Undear Risk Low Risk Low Risk Torres-Santiago, L., Mauras, N., Hossain, J., Weltman, A. L., & Darmaun, D. (2017). Does oral glutamine improve insulin sensitivity in adole scents with type 1 diabetes?. Nutrition (Burbank, Los Angeles County, Calif.), 34, 1-6. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nut.2016.09.003 Low Risk Low Risk Low Risk Low Risk Low Risk Low Risk















# **4 | DISCUSSION**

Despite mixed research findings, the reviewed supplement all show potential value in T1D patients. Data outside of the target population will be analyzed to better inform what is known.

#### **Glutamine Supplementation**

Only two relevant glutamine supplementation studies directly concerning T1D were found for use in this systemized review. Both studies had relatively small sample sizes but had statistically sound analysis [21-22]. The lack of connection to insulin sensitivity implies the mechanism is

potentially linked to something such as β-cell activity [22]. The fact the two studies utilizes adolescent diabetics is important to note especially in the context of findings from research on glutamine outside of T1D because young T1D patients may have residual β-cells [21-22].

Studies on non-diabetic patients supported glutamine supplementation has a distinct effect on glucose metabolism and supports the findings in the previous studies involving T1D patients [23, 25]. While glutamine does not appear to affect insulin sensitivity or secretion, glutamine may aid in maintaining residual β-cell integrity rather than enhancing cellular capabilities [22, 24]. Of note is how glutamine affects cellular dynamics through its modulation of ER membrane stress since apoptotic mechanism has been implicated as a key factor in T1D onset [2-3, 31].

While the research into how glutamine may affect T1D patients is not available, research outside of the scope of T1D alone seems to suggest the mechanism behind its value is linked to the preservation of β-cell function [2-3, 31]. Since the patients in the two T1D glutamine studied mentioned are adolescents, the change in glycemic trends may be linked to residual β-cells improving function—outputting insulin—and leading to hypoglycemia due to the combination of exogenous and endogenous insulin now being in excess [2-3,21-22,31]. While this is speculation, it is a valuable potential research hypothesis to potentially pursue.

#### **Vitamin D Supplementation**

The research on Vitamin D supplementation is mixed in terms of results and quality. Since the mechanism behind how Vitamin D supplements may affect T1D is not established, little can be gleaned from the research on why the findings are so mixed. However, since Vitamin D deficiency is seen to be common in T1D patients, supplementation may still be of value even if it may not have a direct effect on glycemic control [32-37].

Based on research outside of T1D, more insight can be gained on why the findings for T1D are so foggy. While Vitamin D supplementation does not seem to directly affect glycemic control in many instances, Vitamin D seems to have a distinct effect on insulin resistance and, potentially, oxidative stress [40-43].

By improving insulin sensitivity,  $β$ -cells may experience less stress leading to improved insulin dynamics for those with functional β-cells—such as LADA patients [39, 41,43]. Improving insulin resistance may also generally help T1D patients even without residual β-cells due to it decreasing the required exogenous insulin [41]. However, since insulin resistance and residual β-cells are not a universal experience for those with T1D, results of Vitamin D supplementation are understandably mixed.

The findings from this review agree with published advice given by the American Diabetes Association (ADA). The ADA notes the benefits of additional Vitamin D supplementation are not clear, but supplementation may reduce risk for developing T1D in childhood [55].

#### **Magnesium Supplementation**

Information on T1D and magnesium supplemenation have a strong lean towards promoting supplementation and especially repletion of magnesium deficiency [45-48]. A prior metaanalysis of available research supported a link between low magnesium levels and poor glycemic control [56]. Research outside the confines of T1D alone reveals magnesium supplementation may have a link to glycemic control due to its effect on insulin resistance and β-cell function [50-51, 53-54].

While the ADA does not have noted recommendations regarding magnesium, the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NIH) provides recommendations that agree with this review's findings. The NIH notes deficiency in magnesium can raise the chances of developing diabetes and that supplementation can aid those who have the condition [57]. However, the NIH does not specify if this specifically affects T1D and mentions that the studies for this information are lacking in power [57].

#### **Quality and Risk Assessment**

Research for T1D and each supplement reviewed is mixed in quality and risk. Unclear risk was common, especially regarding randomization, allocation concealment, and blinding. This indicates data may suffer from the placebo effect or unintended effects on habits affecting glycemic control—such as potentially changing insulin doses, food, or other such things. Much of the investigated research did not deeply address the mechanisms behind the observations. This is likely due to the sparseness in pool of available sources concerning T1D and these specific supplements.

#### **Strengths and Limitations**

One of the clearest things in this review is the lack of robust research pertaining to how supplementation of any of the reviewed supplements affects people with T1D. There was a sparse amount of data concerning T1D and the specific subgroups of supplements focused on in this review. The reviewed studies tended to have small sample sizes and low power. A lack of blinding or randomization was also common. While the related research that does not directly concern T1D tended to be of good quality, there is only so much data outside of the interest group can do to inform the conversation of how the reviewed supplements affect T1D patients. The research outside of T1D allows for greater insight into what the limited research for T1D supplementation may mean but research that does not directly involve patients with T1D cannot inform any recommendation until research is done to confirm or deny assumptions.

#### **Application for Practitioner**

The application of all the supplements, in a clinical setting, is a bit clouded by both mixed data and lacking data. Most value can be gleaned from how each supplement may help preserve β-cell integrity in those with residual cells or those who are newly diagnosed. While there is limited research on how supplementation of all three reviewed supplements may affect β-cells in T1D, the research outside of the T1D interest group analyzed suggest each

supplement may have significant clinical value to pursue preservation of cells via supplementary nutrition. For those with residual cells or are newly diagnosed, supplementation of magnesium, vitamin D, and glutamine may be of value [2-3,21-22,31,39, 41,43,50-51,53]. In general,remedying nutritional deficiencies is advisable even if the effect is not directly on glycemic control.

# **2 | CONCLUSION**

Glutamine for T1D research is still relatively new and would serve better with more data prior to any form of general recommendation for it [21-22]. Glutamine supplementation in T1D would benefit from more research purely based on the scarceness of what is available in comparison to the other reviewed supplements. Glutamine may have value in those with residual β-cells  $[2-3, 31]$ . While Vitamin D has the most robust selection of data directly relevant to T1D in this review, the mixed results of the vitamin's effects prevent the development of a definitive conclusion on its effectiveness [32-37]. Magnesium has a strong lean towards value as a supplement for T1D and deficiency in it should be considered paramount to remedy [45-48].

Research that investigates how these supplements affect the β-cells of those with T1D would be valuable and would better inform of their effectiveness. The focus on preservation of β-cells in any T1D patient with residual β-cells is of particular value and, as all the reviewed supplements show some influence on β-cell health, each should be reviewed for its cellular effects [2-3,21-22,31,39,41,43,50-51,53].

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