

Learn What the Different Vitamins, Minerals, and Supplements Do

As you know, there are tons of different vitamins and minerals that you need, each of which helps you perform a different function. Because we're sure that you don't remember your 9th grade health class, here's a list of how the main vitamins and minerals help you. If you seem to be having health problems that are all explained by the lack of a particular vitamin, go to your doctor so that he/she can assure you that you need to start adding that vitamin to your diet:

Vitamin A
Vitamin B family
Vitamin C
Vitamin D
Vitamin E
The trace minerals

Vitamin A

The Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA) is 1,000 micrograms (mcg) for men, and 800 mcg for women. This vitamin promotes better **vision**, supports the **immune system** and aids in the growth and maintenance of **bones, cells** and **skin**. But beware of overdosing; too much of vitamin A (six or seven times the RDA) can cause dry skin, headaches, joint pain and insomnia.

The Vitamin B family

The members of this family are key to keeping your body **energized**.

B1 (a.k.a. *thiamin*) helps keep your **appetite** stable. The RDA is 1.5 mg for men and 1.1 mg for women.

B2 (a.k.a. *riboflavin*) also helps with **energy metabolism**. Riboflavin aids your **eyes** and works for healthier **skin**. The RDA for men is 1.7 mg and women should aim for 1.3 mg per day.

B3 (a.k.a. *niacin*) is actually made by your body. Niacin helps your **metabolism**, improves the condition of your **skin**, and supports both the **digestive** and **nervous systems**. Since you may have enough B3 in your diet, the RDA is merely an estimate. Men should get 19 mg per day and women should get 15 mg.

B6 allows you to **think** more clearly, supports the **immune system** and **hormone activity**. The intake of alcohol prohibits your B6 activity, so people who drink should especially watch for their B6 levels. Men should get 2 mg a day and women should get 1.6 mg.

B12 protects your **nervous system** and supports both **bone growth** and **metabolism**. Men and women should get about 2 mg a day.

Folate (a.k.a. *folic acid*) is essential for **new cell development**. And yet, your body is a snob when it comes to accepting this B vitamin. While you can get folic acid from eating leafy greens, legumes and liver, your body doesn't like to absorb it from these sources. Only half of the folate you get from foods will be accepted. Instead, your body prefers the so-called "free" folate found in supplements. Men should get 200 mcg a day and women should get 180 mcg per day.

Vitamin C

Pay close attention to the following fact; it is bound to be the correct response to a \$250,000 question on that *Millionaire* show. The first nutrition experiment ever performed on a human took

place in the 1700s when doctors experimented with vitamin C to find a cure for scurvy. Vitamin C helps **prevent disease and infection** and promotes the body's **absorption of iron**. It also helps **bones grow**, is involved in the formation of **scar tissue**, and strengthens the **blood vessels**. The RDA for men and women is 60 mg a day. Be wary of getting too much - more than 1,000 mg can cause cramps and diarrhea.

Vitamin D

The RDA for this vitamin is rather low because your body is capable of making it with the help of sunlight. Vitamin D fortifies the **bones** and plays supporting roles in the maintenance of your **brain, pancreas, skin, muscles, reproductive organs** and **immune system**. People between ages 19 and 24 need 10 mg every day and those 25 and older need 5 mg. If you spend enough time in the sun, you may not need any supplement. But if you're stuck inside that little cubby of an office for 80 or more hours a week and rarely emerge from your batcave on the weekend, you may want to look into getting some extra vitamin D.

Vitamin E

Vitamin E helps give you **healthy skin**, can **heal scars**, and even **protects the lungs** from air pollutants. While legend has it that vitamin E increases sexual virility, there isn't really any proof for that. Sorry. Men should aim for 10 mg a day and women should get 8 mg.

The trace minerals: Calcium, Copper, Chromium, Iron, Selenium, and Zinc

While the body needs only very small amount of each of these five minerals, they are essential to overall good health.

Calcium is best known for keeping your **bones strong** and preventing them from becoming **brittle**. As everyone knows, calcium is found in milk, but one study showed that 80% of all teenage girls (who need the highest level of calcium) don't even get half of their daily need. Prevent the hunchback syndrome by adding 1000 mg to your diet every day.

Copper helps you absorb **iron** and **heals wounds**. Adults need 1.5 to 3.0 mg of copper each day.

Chromium helps maintain the body's balance of **glucose** (blood sugar) and is required for the body to release the energy from the glucose. Adults need anywhere from 50 to 200 mg a day.

Iron is essential for the transport and release of **oxygen** throughout the body. Men need 10mg a day and women need 15 mg.

Selenium supports the functions of vitamin E and is thought to prevent against cancer. Men need 70 mg of this antioxidant each day and women should get 55 mg.

Zinc plays a role in your sense of **taste**, helps make **sperm, heals wounds** and aids in making **genetic materials** and proteins. Men should get 15 mg a day and women should get 12 mg.