

Delta Gamma Well Aware

Encompasses eight dimensions: Social, Spiritual, Physical, Emotional, Vocational, Intellectual, Financial and Leadership Development

Vitamin Supplements – Do you Really Need Them?



Does it ever seem like there are dozens of vitamin supplements on the market that are “essential” to your health? Read on to see what each vitamin does and whether you are getting it in your diet.

vitamin A (beta-carotene)

Beta-carotene is converted to vitamin A in the body so the two terms are often used interchangeably on vitamin labels.

- *Daily Recommended Value:* 4,000 IU
- *You need it because:* vitamin A is essential to healthy eyesight and also helps the body to resist infection
- *You can get it:* beta-carotene, which the body converts to vitamin A as needed, can be found in vegetables such as carrots, sweet potatoes and spinach and fruits such as oranges, raspberries and mangoes. Vitamin A can be found in egg yolks, animal liver and whole milk.
- *Warning:* Consuming more than 6,600 IU of preformed vitamin A a day (not beta-carotene) from food and supplements can increase the risk of bone loss and fractures

Calcium

The most abundant mineral in the human body, but most Americans only consume half of the dietary calcium their bodies require.

- *Daily Recommended Value:* 1,000-1,200 mg
- *You need it because:* calcium is stored in the bones and teeth, keeping them healthy and strong, and also plays a role in digestion, nutrient movement, blood clotting and more
- *You can get it:* dairy products such as milk, cheese and yogurt
- *Warning:* The body can only absorb 500 mg of calcium at a time, so supplements should be taken twice daily, along with vitamin D, for maximum absorption. Also, high doses of calcium can hinder the absorption of other minerals.

vitamin C (Ascorbic Acid)

Vitamin C plays a large role in hundreds of the body's functions, and is also known as ascorbic acid.

- *Daily Recommended Value:* at least 60-500mg/varies
- *You need it because:* vitamin C aids in metabolism, supports a strong immune system, maintains a healthy nervous system and so much more
- *You can get it:* fresh fruits and vegetables like oranges, tomatoes, spinach, strawberries, etc.
- *Warning:* Consuming more than 450 mg of vitamin C daily is wasteful as your body will simply eliminate the unused product..

vitamin D

The only vitamin the body manufactures naturally, vitamin D is technically considered a hormone.

- *Daily Recommended Value:* 200-400 IU
- *You need it because:* vitamin D helps to build strong bones, strengthens the immune system and helps to maintain normal muscle and nerve function
- *You can get it:* from the sun's UVB rays; just 10-15 minutes in the sun a week supplies adequate amounts. Supplements may be necessary for those who are unable to obtain enough sunlight.
- *Warning:* Consuming more than 1,000 IU of vitamin D a day can induce a toxic reaction including headache, loss of appetite and extreme thirst. Long term overconsumption may cause weakened bones and hardened arteries.

vitamin E

Only identified by scientists 80 years ago, vitamin E is actually an umbrella term for a group of compounds called tocopherols and tocotrienols.

- *Daily Recommended Value:* 12 mg or 21 IU
- *You need it because:* as a powerful antioxidant, vitamin E protects cells from damaging free radicals and also helps in the formation of red blood cells.
- *You can get it:* in nuts such as almonds and peanuts, and green leafy vegetables like kale
- *Warning:* Do not take vitamin E before or after any type of surgery as it has a blood thinning effect. Note that when purchasing a vitamin E supplement, the all natural d-alpha tocopherols are much better absorbed by the body than synthetic dl-alpha tocopherols.

B vitamins

vitamin B-1 (Thiamin)

- Found in meat, whole grains, fish and nuts, thiamin is necessary for almost every cellular reaction in the body. Women should get 1.1 mg of thiamin daily.

vitamin B-2 (Riboflavin)

- Riboflavin is readily absorbed from meats, dairy products and fortified grains. It is essential to energy generation, nerve and blood cell development and the regulation of hormones. Women should get about 1.1 mg of riboflavin a day.

vitamin B-3 (Niacin)

- Niacin creates enzymes that are essential to metabolic cell activity, much like the other B vitamins. Meat, fish and whole grains are great sources of niacin and women should get 14 mg of B-3 a day.

vitamin B-5 (Pantothenic Acid)

- A coenzyme involved with the energy metabolism of carbohydrates, protein and fat, vitamin B-5 can be found in eggs, nuts and whole wheat products. Women should get 5mg a day.

vitamin B-6 (Pyridoxine)

- A coenzyme that can be found in meat, fish, eggs, and whole grain foods, vitamin B-6 supports healthy skin, nail and hair and assists in the production of food energy. Women should get 1.3mg to 1.5 mg daily.

vitamin B-9 (Folic Acid, Folate)

- Serving as a coenzyme during DNA formation, folic acid is essential to the growth and production of all body cells, making it essential during conception to reduce birth defects. Folic acid can be found in dark green, leafy vegetables and women should consume from 400mg-600mg a day.

vitamin B-12 (Cyanocobalamin)

- Not found in plant foods, good sources of vitamin B-12 include meat, eggs, fish and dairy products. This coenzyme promotes growth and cell development, and is essential to metabolism. Women should get between 2.4mcg and 2.6 mcg a day.

Multivitamins

Ideally, everyone would get their nutrients from a healthy, balanced diet but that isn't usually the case. A multivitamin is an excellent way to supplement a diet while lowering the risk for certain types of cancer and cardiovascular disease. Multivitamins usually contain all of the vitamins listed above, as well as other essential vitamins and minerals.

You may want to consider taking a multivitamin if you are:

- over 60 years old

- of childbearing age
- pregnant or breast-feeding
- a strict vegetarian or vegan
- on a weight-loss diet
- a heavy smoker or drinker
- not eating a balanced diet

Keep the following in mind when choosing the right multivitamin:

- Multivitamins should not cost more than a few cents a day.
- "USP" should be on the label, indicating that the product meets the standards of the U.S. Pharmacopeia.
- Look for 100% of the Recommended Daily Value of the following vitamins: vitamin D, B-1, B-2, B-3, B-6, B-12 and folic acid.
- No more than 5,000 IU of vitamin A should be contained in the multivitamin, but at least 40% of that should be in the form of beta-carotene.
- Look for up to 100% of the Recommended Daily Value of copper, zinc, iodine, selenium and chromium.
- Premenopausal women should look for 100% of the Recommended Daily Value of iron and postmenopausal women need only 45% or less of the Daily value. Do not take multivitamins containing iron at the same time as calcium supplements, as iron interferes with calcium absorption.
- More than 100% of the Daily Recommended Value does not mean a multivitamin is better; large doses of some vitamins can interfere with absorption of others.
- Works like "high-potency," "senior formula," "stress formula" and "slow release" are just pricey gimmicks, along with added ingredients such as enzymes, hormones, amino acids, PABA, ginseng and other herbs.
- ALWAYS TAKE YOUR MULTIVITAMIN WITH FOOD FOR MAXIMUM ABSORPTION!

Wellness Resources

UC, Berkeley Wellness Letter, www.wellnessletter.com

Food and Nutrition Information Center, www.nal.usda.gov/fnic

Vitamins Diary, www.vitaminsdiary.com

The Vitamins and Nutrition Center, www.vitamins-nutrition.org

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