

Supplements Vs. Foods

WHERE TO GET YOUR VITAMINS AND MINERALS

Expertise in Matters of the Heart

Is it possible to get all the nutrients the typical American needs from supplements while continuing to skip the recommended amounts of whole grains, fruits and vegetables? Sorry the answer is no. Dietary supplements were never developed to be food replacements, as they cannot replicate all the nutrition of whole foods like lean meats, fish, fruits, vegetables and whole grains. But they can still play an important role in your diet if you have trouble getting all the nutrition you need from foods on a daily basis.

Supplements which may be beneficial to help prevent deficiency, without providing too much nutrition include the following:

- **A balanced multivitamin/mineral pill or liquid supplement** like Centrum, Centrum Silver, One-A Day, and others providing up to 200% Daily Value (DV) for all the vitamins and minerals listed. Check the supplements facts label on the back of the bottle – more than 200% DV of vitamins doesn't provide extra benefit nor has it been shown to prevent disease.
- **Calcium plus Vitamin D:** Aim for 1000-1200 mg calcium and 800-1000 IU vitamin D daily. Your multivitamin will provide some calcium and vitamin D as well – the amounts above are total



recommended intake for the day. For best absorption, split your calcium dose. Take one pill with breakfast or lunch and one pill with dinner. The magnesium in your multivitamin is generally enough – most of us don't need extra in calcium supplements.

- **Magnesium:** Magnesium helps maintain normal muscle and nerve function and also helps with maintaining healthy bones. But magnesium can also cause issues such as diarrhea, nausea, muscle weakness and kidney failure if taken in large doses for long periods of time. Aim to keep total magnesium intake from supplements at 350mg per day or less. Magnesium is easily absorbed from meat, seafood, dairy products, whole grains and green veggies, so deficiency is rare. A balanced diet is the best way to attain your nutrient needs.
- **Potassium:** Potassium is an essential mineral for heart health as well as prevention of muscle cramps,

but is rarely found at high levels in multivitamins. Along with calcium, magnesium and sodium, potassium makes up a class of minerals also known as electrolytes. Potassium is easily attained from fruits, veggies, meats, fish and dairy products. The daily intake of potassium (4700mg per day for adults) can be attained by eating 1 potato or yam, 8 oz of milk or yogurt, 1 banana or orange, and 1-2 cups of vegetables or beans.

Your doctor may prescribe a potassium supplement when you are prescribed certain medications like Lasix or Furosemide as these medications can cause your body to lose potassium faster than you can replace it via dietary intake from foods. Be sure to take prescribed potassium supplements as directed.

- **Omega-3:** Aim for 1000-4000 mg EPA + DHA per day from fish oil or 7000 mg ALA from flaxseed oil daily. This dosing information will be on the supplement facts label on the back of your supplement bottle. It will take several pills per day to reach the above amounts. 1000 mg of fish oil may only contain 300 mg EPA + DHA. Omega-3 is an essential fat and has been shown to be beneficial for heart health, eye health, brain health and is also a natural anti-inflammatory.

Remember – supplements have rarely been shown to be beneficial in preventing or treating disease. Exceptions are vitamin or mineral

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deficiency diseases such as osteoporosis, scurvy, or anemia. Research has not supported the theory that vitamin E, vitamin C or any other single nutrient in supplement form can prevent heart disease or other chronic diseases.

Choosing and using

supplements: If you decide to use a vitamin or mineral supplement, please consider the following:

- **Always take vitamin, mineral & omega-3 supplements with food:** they are better absorbed and used by your body when taken with a meal or with in 1-2 hours of eating.
- **Check the label:** The supplement label will tell you the serving size and amount of nutrients per serving. Choose a balanced supplement with 100% of each nutrient listed (calcium is an exception in multivitamin/mineral pills).
- **Avoid “megadoses”:** Stick to supplements that have no more than 200% of the DRI for each nutrient unless prescribed by your medical professional. Higher doses may have negative side effects and could interfere with your medications.
- **Beware of “extras”:** Synthetic vitamins are usually just as well absorbed and used by the body as so called “natural” ones – but the “natural” ones usually come with a higher price tag. Added herbs, enzymes and amino acids also

increase the cost but don't typically bring all the benefits being touted on the label. In fact some of those herbs may have negative interactions with your medications.

- **Look for expiration dates:** Like all active pills, vitamin and mineral supplement can lose potency over time or if exposed to heat or humidity. If a supplement doesn't have an expiration date, don't buy it, and if your supplements have expired, throw them out. Store supplements in a cool, dry, dark place safely away from children.
- **Always tell your medical professionals about any supplements you may be taking:** Vitamins, minerals and other dietary supplements are active compounds and may interfere with other medical treatments or medications you may be taking. Talk with your doctor about any safety concerns.
- **The FDA does not monitor health claims on supplement labels:** Be cautious about believing what you read on supplement labels, as often claims are written to encourage you to buy a supplement, not because the supplement is necessarily going to benefit your health. If you have questions about what supplements can benefit you, please speak with a registered dietitian, your doctor or a pharmacist.

The best prevention and treatment plans for chronic disease such as heart disease, diabetes and cancer include:

- Avoiding tobacco products and second-hand smoke
- Daily intake of a healthy and balanced diet
- Plenty of water and other unsweetened beverages (Limit intake of sodas, juices, diet drinks and so on. Focus on water, plain tea or black coffee)
- Regular exercise (30-60 minutes moderate exercise 5 or more days per week)
- Good stress management, and 7-9 hours of uninterrupted sleep nightly

If you have further questions about supplements, or would like a trained nutrition and health professional to help you start or maintain healthy lifestyle habits, please contact one of our registered dietitians by calling 970-221-1000. They hold clinics in our Fort Collins, Loveland, Sterling, Scottsbluff, Fort Morgan and Estes Park offices and are happy to go over your nutrient needs with you to help you pick supplements and lifestyle habits which may be beneficial to you.



For more information call (970) 221-1000, (800) 459-4241, or visit www.heartcenteroftherockies.com