



— Vitamins and minerals —

# Are you getting enough?

We all know we need vitamins and minerals, so we've covered the important ones, what they do and where to get them

**V**itamins and minerals are essential nutrients we all require in small amounts. Most people can get them from a balanced diet. However, those cutting out certain food groups, or at specific life stages, may need to consider a supplement to avoid deficiency.

## SIGHT SAVIOUR

**Vitamin A** There are two forms of vitamin A: retinol and beta-carotene. Retinol comes from animal products, such as dairy, whereas beta-carotene is found mainly in orange-coloured foods, such as carrots and orange peppers. Vitamin A aids vision and the normal function of your immune system.

# 25%

the proportion of women whose iron intake is below the recommended level\*

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\*Source: The National Diet and Nutrition Survey

## ENERGY GIVERS

**B vitamins** help our bodies release energy from food, so not getting enough can leave us feeling tired. There are eight types of B vitamin, but the most noteworthy are folic acid (B9) and B12. Folic acid is important during pregnancy as it helps reduce the risk of neural tube defects in babies. As a result, a supplement is recommended for those trying to get pregnant, and in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. B12 is found in animal products, such as meat and dairy. For vegans, it's worth considering a B12 supplement or eating fortified foods.

## IMMUNE SYSTEM HELPER

**Vitamin C** is found in fruits like oranges, but did you know peppers and broccoli actually contain more? Vitamin C is needed for the normal function of your immune system.

Diversity and colour in what you eat are a great way to get a variety of vitamins and minerals into your diet

## ANTIOXIDANT HERO

**Vitamin E** is a fat-soluble antioxidant that supports the protection of cells from oxidative stress. It's found in an abundance of foods, but we absorb it best in fat-rich foods, such as nuts and avocados.

## THE SUNSHINE VITAMIN

**Vitamin D** is made when skin is exposed to sunlight for a short period. It helps us absorb phosphorus and calcium, which keep our muscles and bones healthy. It's in food too, but it's hard to get enough from food alone, so supplements of 10mcg per day are advised in autumn and winter, and when you can't get outside often.

## THE HEALER

**Vitamin K** plays a role in healing cuts by helping your blood clot, which helps wounds heal. Keep your levels up by eating lots of green veg, such as spinach and broccoli.

## KIDS AND VITAMINS

The Department of Health recommends children aged six months to five years take vitamin A, C and D supplements (unless they're drinking 500ml infant formula a day). Some kids are eligible for free vitamins on the NHS; visit [healthystart.nhs.uk](http://healthystart.nhs.uk) for info.

## Minerals

### CALCIUM

Calcium is needed at every age for strong bones and teeth. It's especially important during puberty, old age and for mothers when breastfeeding. The best sources are dairy and fortified alternatives.

### IODINE

We need iodine to make essential hormones for our metabolism. Adequate iodine intake is especially important during pregnancy and infancy, as it's needed for brain development. Find it in seafood, dairy products, and fortified plant-based milk alternatives.

### IRON

Iron is needed to make red blood cells, which transport oxygen around the body. Not getting enough can leave you feeling tired, so we need to make sure we are eating plenty of iron-rich foods. Red meat is one of the richest sources as it's easily absorbed, but it's also found in plants such as lentils, as well as dried figs and apricots.

### POTASSIUM

This mineral controls fluid balance in the body and helps us keep a steady heartbeat. Bananas are known for being potassium-rich but avocados and sweet potatoes are also sources.

### MAGNESIUM

This mineral helps regulate muscle and nerve function. It's naturally found in many foods, including wholegrains and green vegetables.

### ZINC

Zinc helps our wounds heal, as it assists in making new cells. Find it in meat, shellfish and wholegrain foods. The amount of zinc you need increases as you age.