

Dietary Supplements



KEY TAKEAWAYS



For most healthy adults who eat a balanced diet, vitamins and mineral supplements are not necessary, and there is no good evidence that they prevent heart disease, cancer, dementia, or help people live longer.



Most vitamins are best obtained from a balanced diet, not from supplements.



WHO MAY NEED SUPPLEMENTS?



Pregnant or planning pregnancy



Vegans



Poor dietary intake



Digestive disorders causing poor nutrient absorption



After bariatric surgery (e.g. gastric bypass)



Kidney dialysis patients



Alcohol use disorder



Taking medications that affect vitamin absorption (e.g. Metformin)



Consult your healthcare provider before starting any vitamin supplements.



VITAMIN D

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

- ✓ Supports bone health
- ✓ May reduce fracture risk (especially in deficient individuals)
- ✓ May reduce fall risk in some older adults

UNPROVEN FOR

- ✗ Cancer prevention
- ✗ Heart disease prevention
- ✗ Dementia prevention
- ✗ Autoimmune disease prevention

TYPICAL SUPPLEMENT DOSE

- Generally healthy adults: 1,000–2,000 IU daily
- Older adults or high-risk groups: 1,000–2,000 IU daily
- Higher doses may be recommended by a doctor if deficiency is confirmed by blood test

Vitamin D supplements are most beneficial for those who are deficient or at high risk of deficiency.



CALCIUM

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

- ✓ Supports bone health
- ✓ May reduce risk of osteoporosis when combined with adequate vitamin D

DAILY RECOMMENDED INTAKE (from diet + supplements)

19–50 yrs 1,000 mg	Women >50 yrs 1,200 mg	Men >70 yrs 1,200 mg
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GOOD SOURCES OF CALCIUM



SUPPLEMENT TIPS

- Get calcium from food first
- If supplementing, 500–600 mg at a time is best absorbed
- Unless advised by your doctor, most people should not exceed 2,000 mg total per day



ANTIOXIDANT VITAMINS (VITAMINS A, C, E)

Diets rich in fruits and vegetables are linked to better health, but studies do not show that antioxidant vitamin supplements provide the same benefits.



VITAMIN A

- Not recommended for routine supplementation
- Excess may increase fracture risk
- High doses in pregnancy may cause birth defects
- Beta-carotene supplements may increase lung cancer risk in smokers

VITAMIN C

- Does not prevent cancer or heart disease
- May slightly shorten the duration of colds
- High doses may increase risk of kidney stones



VITAMIN E

- Does not prevent cancer, heart disease, dementia, or infections
- High doses may increase bleeding risk and possibly death risk



B VITAMINS

VITAMIN B12

WHO MAY NEED IT?

- ✓ Vegans
- ✓ Older adults
- ✓ Those taking Metformin
- ✓ Poor diet
- ✓ Malabsorption problems

DEFICIENCY MAY CAUSE

- Anemia
- Numbness or tingling in hands and feet
- Memory and neurological problems

TYPICAL SUPPLEMENT DOSE

- General health: 250–500 mcg daily
- Vegans: 250–500 mcg daily or 1,000 mcg 2–3 times per week
- Confirmed deficiency: Usually 1,000–2,000 mcg daily (as advised by doctor)

Vitamin B12 is very safe. Excess is usually excreted in urine.



FOLIC ACID (VITAMIN B9)

Very important for women who are planning pregnancy or may become pregnant.

BENEFITS

- ♥ Reduces risk of neural tube defects (e.g. spina bifida)

RECOMMENDED DOSE

- 400 mcg daily
- Start at least 1 month before pregnancy and continue through early pregnancy
- Higher doses may be needed for some high-risk individuals



VITAMIN B2 (RIBOFLAVIN)

- May help some people with migraines
- No clear benefit for most healthy adults

MIGRAINE PREVENTION DOSE

- 400 mg daily



VITAMIN B6

- No evidence to prevent cancer or heart disease
- Most people get enough from diet



MULTIVITAMINS

For most healthy adults, there is no good evidence that multivitamins can:

- ✗ Prevent heart disease
- ✗ Prevent cancer
- ✗ Prevent dementia
- ✗ Extend lifespan

WHO MAY BENEFIT?

- ✓ Poor nutritional intake
- ✓ Restricted diets
- ✓ Malabsorption
- ✓ Certain medical conditions

Standard doses of multivitamins are usually safe.



CAN VITAMINS BE HARMFUL?

Yes. More is not better. High doses of vitamins can cause harm:

- ⚠ Vitamin A: Birth defects, fractures
- ⚠ Vitamin C: Kidney stones
- ⚠ Vitamin E: Increased bleeding risk
- ⚠ Vitamin D: High blood calcium



Some over-the-counter supplements contain doses much higher than the daily recommended amounts. Follow recommended doses and discuss your plan with your healthcare provider.



WHAT ABOUT OTHER SUPPLEMENTS?

Many products claim to boost health, extend life, strengthen immunity, improve brain function, protect the heart, or prevent cancer, such as:



While some may be helpful for certain medical conditions or deficiencies, overall there is limited high-quality evidence that these supplements improve health, prevent chronic disease, or extend lifespan in healthy adults.



MOST IMPORTANT HEALTH HABITS

For most people, these habits provide the greatest health benefits:



Eat a balanced diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables



Exercise regularly



Maintain a healthy weight



Don't smoke



Limit alcohol



Manage stress well

If you are considering a supplement not covered in this guide, please consult your family doctor or healthcare provider to determine what is right for your individual situation.

PRACTICAL TIPS

- ✓ Focus on a balanced diet, not supplements.
- ✓ Consider vitamin D 1,000–2,000 IU daily if needed.
- ✓ Aim for 1,000–1,200 mg of calcium daily, mainly from food.
- ✓ Take folic acid if planning pregnancy or during pregnancy.
- ✓ Vegans or high-risk groups should consider vitamin B12.
- ✓ Avoid high-dose vitamin supplements unless advised by your healthcare provider.



For more resources on health a wellness, please visit drleodai.com