

Vitamins & Minerals In Nutrition

Discussing minerals and vitamins with most people usually leads to questions about vitamin supplements. This topic is so much larger than that. Your diet should be the first and best source of nutrients for your health, including vitamins. Natural and organic foods have vitamins, minerals, and enzymes that your body needs. Eating a balanced diet with plenty of options from this category should meet your vitamin and mineral needs. You may be one of the many who believe that conventionally grown foods are just as good as organic produce. Please keep in mind that a farmer who uses artificial chemicals to ward off insects, funguses, and molds also are putting these harsh chemicals into your body. If you use traditional produce you should absolutely use an organic vegetable wash solution to remove as much chemical residue as possible off of the food. But the pesticides and herbicides aside; the conventional farmer fertilizes to stimulate the plant. This "forces" the plant to be larger and more colorful than nature intended. But worse yet, because the isolated chemical fertilizers do not build the soil, the very foundation of our nutrition, natural vitamins and minerals in the soil, is eroded and weakened. The plants we eat take up varying amounts of nutrients from the soil, based on their genetic makeup. Thus, some foods are higher in some nutrients than others. This promotes a varied diet. Organic farmers build up the soil and allow the plants to be nurtured by it. Thus, the soil is rich in natural vitamins and minerals that are drawn up into the plant that becomes our food. So, you see, it isn't a matter of being an environmental-wacko in eating organic food. It truly is a matter of your health! But isn't that easier said than done? Your diet probably includes far too much protein from animal sources, loaded with saturated fats, have no enzymes and lesser amounts of vitamins and minerals. If you eat conventionally grown produce the soil is depleted of minerals that the plant would normally feast upon. Then the problem of processed foods, i.e. cooked, frozen, canned, results in very low levels of minerals, vitamins and enzymes. This means less nutrition for your body. What are you to do? You have the best intentions to eat right. However, with what seems to be the nutritional odds stacked against you, you have to make do elsewhere. For you the best solution probably is a multi-vitamin and mineral supplement. But beware, not all supplements are created equal. Look for one that contains pharmaceutical grade vitamins, chelated minerals, and standardized herbal extracts. Your body will absorb the maximum amount possible. These cost a little more, but the higher quality means that you are putting most of the supplement to work in your body, instead of wasting money. Good health, adequate nutrition, and vitamin supplements do go together. One other remaining question is how much supplementation do you need? Proper meal planning is essential to achieving all of your nutritional goals, including adequate vitamin and mineral intake. An online meal planner can really simplify your task of balancing your diet. Look for one that uses scientifically researched and accurate food nutrient data, like the USDA Food Nutrient Database. Here's to your health through good nutrition.

About the Author

Center for Food, Nutrition and Agriculture Policy. College Park to form the newly created Center for Food, Nutrition, and Agriculture.

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