

CHOOSING A MULTIVITAMIN AND MINERAL SUPPLEMENT



Who Needs a Multivitamin/Mineral Supplement?

A recent study from the American Medical Association found that even though Americans get many vitamins from foods, **most** adults still should take a multivitamin and mineral supplement. Taking such a supplement can prevent **low levels** of:

- folic acid, vitamin B6, and vitamin B12 can reduce cardiovascular disease, neural tube defects, and colon and breast cancer
- vitamin D helps prevent soft bones and fractures
- vitamin A, vitamin E, and vitamin C decrease risk of other chronic diseases

SF VA Medical Center

Nutrition Outpatient Service Clinic

4150 Clement Street

San Francisco, CA 94121

Phone: (415) 221-4810 X2895

**RECOMMENDED AMOUNTS OF
VITAMINS AND MINERALS
IN A MULTIVITAMIN AND MINERAL SUPPLEMENT**

Vitamin	Recommended in a Multivitamin
Thiamin (B1)	1.5 mg
Riboflavin (B2)	1.7 mg
Niacin (B3)	20 mg
Folic Acid	400 mcg
Vitamin B6	2 mg
Vitamin B12	6 mcg
Vitamin D	400 IU
Vitamin E	30 IU
Vitamin C	90 mg (men) 75 mg (women)
Vitamin K	80 mcg
If you are on blood-thinners such as warfarin, check with your doctor before taking ANY supplement that contains vitamin K.	
Vitamin A	Less than 4000 IU

Mineral	Recommended in a Multivitamin
Chromium	35 mcg (men to age 50) 30 mcg (men 50+) 25 mcg (women to age 50) 20 mcg (women 50+)
Copper	900 mcg
Selenium	55 mcg
Zinc	11 mg (men) 8 mg (women)
Calcium	200 mg
Magnesium	100 mg
Phosphorus	250 mg
Iron	8 mg (men) 8 mg (women post-menopause) 18 mg (women pre-menopause)



BASIC TIPS

A multivitamin/mineral supplement is intended to **supplement, not replace** a healthy diet. Here are a few basic tips and precautions to follow when choosing a supplement.

VITAMINS

Vitamin A

- Limit the retinol form (from animal foods) to less than 4300-6600 IU. More may increase risk for hip fracture. More than 10,000 IU is toxic and can damage the liver.
- Limit the beta-carotene form (from fruits and vegetables) to less than 15000 IU. More may increase risk of lung cancer in smokers. Beta-carotene from foods is safe. Focus on bright orange or leafy green fruits and vegetables.

Vitamin E

- Limit vitamin E to less than 200 IU. Focus on nuts, seeds, and whole grains.

Vitamin K

- New recommendations are 120 mcg for men and 90 mcg for women.
- Vitamin K may prevent some hip fractures.
- Vitamin K interferes with blood thinners. Check with your doctor before taking a supplement with vitamin K.

Vitamin B6

- Limit vitamin B6 to less than 100 mg. More can cause reversible nerve damage.

MINERALS

Calcium

- Recommendations are 1,000 mg to age 50 and 1,200 mg after age 50+.
- These amounts are too high to fit into one supplement. Focus on dairy products and fortified foods or separate supplements.

Magnesium

- Recommendations are 420 mg for men and 320 mg for women.
- These amounts are too high to fit into one supplement. Focus on beans, nuts, and seeds, or separate supplements.
- Limit magnesium supplements to less than 350 mg at once. More can cause diarrhea.

Phosphorus

- Limit phosphorus to 250 mg. We get enough in foods.

Iron

- Limit iron to 8 mg for men and post-menopausal women and 18 mg for pre-menopausal women. Too much iron can cause iron overload.

FINAL NOTE



Remember to check with your doctor if there is any reason you should not take a multivitamin and mineral supplement.

Some vitamins or minerals can be dangerous to take for people with some health conditions, including kidney or liver disease.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact:

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References:

- Genger, T. (2003). Spin the Bottle: How to Pick a Multivitamin. *Nutrition Action Healthletter*, 30 (1): 3-9.
- Ward, EM. (2001). The Merits of Multivitamins: EN's Guide to Choosing a Supplement. *Environmental Nutrition*, 24 (6): 1-5.
- Fletcher, RH & Fairfield, KM. (2002). Vitamins for Chronic Disease Prevention in Adults: Clinical Applications. *JAMA*, 287 (23): 3127-3129.