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**Are Vitamin Supplements Really Necessary?**

**By Renee Kennedy**

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Are Vitamin Supplements Really Necessary?  
by Renee Kennedy

It is a fact that vitamins are important to a healthy diet. Without certain vitamins, your body could be at risk for disease. There are some studies on how specific vitamins can help specific illnesses. Some of those studies are mentioned below and references are listed at the end of the article.

However, most of the medical community seems to agree that getting your vitamins from whole foods is much better than taking supplements.

There are exceptions to this. For example, if you're pregnant, a folic acid supplement may be prescribed by your doctor. Another example is taking doctor recommended vitamin supplements for a specific illness.

Do not take vitamin supplements without consulting your health care provider, especially if you are on any medications or you have any illness or special health conditions (like pregnancy, anemia, heart condition, etc.).

## Are Vitamin Supplements Really Necessary?

Here are the most important vitamins:

### Vitamin A

—Affects: skin, tissue growth and regeneration, eyes, white blood cells, bone and teeth growth and mucus membranes in mouth, nose, throat, lungs.

—Daily Recommended Dosage: 5,000 IU for men and 4,000 IU for women

—Whole Foods: whole milk, fat-free milk fortified with vitamin A, whole eggs, liver, beef, chicken, dark green leafy vegetables, carrots, sweet potatoes, spinach, broccoli, cantaloupe, mangos, apricots, tomato juice.

—Deficiency Symptoms: teeth and gum problems, fatigue, loss of appetite, dry, scaly skin, increase susceptibility to infection, night blindness. (Vitamin A deficiency would be rare in the United States, it occurs mainly in developing countries where people are malnourished.)

—Warnings: High doses of Vitamin A from supplements can cause birth defects, liver problems and reduction in bone density.

—Research: A recent study found that beta carotene along with other antioxidants and zinc may slow down macular degeneration. Your doctor will prescribe the proper vitamins if you have macular degeneration.

### Vitamin B6

—Affects: brain and metabolism

—Daily Recommended Dosage: 1.3 to 1.7 milligrams

—Whole Foods: Poultry, fish, pork, eggs, soybeans, oats, whole-grain foods, nuts, seeds and bananas.

—Deficiency Symptoms: skin problems, anemia in adults, convulsions in infants

—Warnings: High doses of B6 may cause nerve damage.

### Vitamin B9: Folic Acid

—Affects: developing fetus, red blood cell formation, protein metabolism, growth and cell division

—Daily Recommended Dosage: 400 micrograms

—Whole Foods: Citrus juices and fruits, beans, nuts, seeds, liver, dark green leafy vegetables (spinach, beet greens) and fortified grain products (rice, bread, cereal, pasta).

—Warnings: High doses over 1500 mcg/day should be avoided as it can cause a variety of symptoms like nausea and loss of appetite.

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—Research: A Folic acid supplement can reduce the risk of neural tube defects in the developing fetus when taken by the mother before and during pregnancy.

### Vitamin B12

—Affects: red blood cells, metabolism and nerves  
—Daily Recommended Dosage: 6 micrograms  
—Whole Foods: Meat, fish, shellfish, poultry, eggs and dairy products.  
—Deficiency Symptoms: memory loss, disorientation, hallucinations, and tingling in the arms and legs

### Vitamin C

—Affects: skin, immunity to illness, healing of wounds  
—Daily Recommended Dosage: 90 mg for men and 75 mg for women (and an extra 35 mg for smokers)  
—Whole Foods: Citrus juice and fruit, berries, tomatoes,

potatoes, green and red peppers, broccoli and spinach.

—Deficiency Symptoms: weakness, irritability, weight loss, bleeding gums, infection, gangrene, hemorrhaging, wounds that won't heal.  
—Warnings: Excess vitamin C may cause mild diarrhea  
—Research: A recent study found that vitamin C along with other antioxidants and zinc may slow down macular degeneration. Your doctor will prescribe the proper vitamins if you have macular degeneration.

### Vitamin D

—Affects: bone, teeth and absorption of calcium  
—Daily Recommended Dosage:  
up to age 50: 5 micrograms  
51 – 70: 10 micrograms  
after 70: 15 micrograms  
—Whole Foods: Vitamin D–fortified milk, vitamin D–fortified cereal, liver, egg yolks, fish and fish liver oils. And Sunlight!  
—Deficiency Symptoms: bone softening  
—Warnings: Prolonged use of excess Vitamin D is not recommended. Can cause kidney damage, high blood pressure, headaches, and other problems.  
—Research: Vitamin D combined with calcium may slow bone loss and reduce fractures.

### Vitamin E

—Affects: red blood cells, reproduction, aging

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—Daily Recommended Dosage: 15 milligrams from food  
OR 22 IU from natural-source vitamin E OR 33 IU from the  
synthetic form

—Whole Foods: Vegetable oils, wheat germ, whole-grain  
products, avocados, nuts and peanut butter.

—Warnings: In rare cases when Vitamin E is taken in high  
doses it can cause many types of symptoms including bleeding  
and gastrointestinal problems.

—Research: A recent study found that vitamin E along with  
other antioxidants and zinc may slow down macular degeneration.  
Your doctor will prescribe the proper vitamins if you have  
macular degeneration. Studies have indicated that Vitamin E may  
slow Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases.

### References:

American Heart Association Vitamin and Mineral Supplements:  
<http://216.185.112.5/presenter.jhtml?identifier=4788>

National Eye Institute Age Related Eye Disease Study:  
<http://www.nei.nih.gov/amd/summary.htm>

American Academy of Pediatrics Folic Acid for the  
Prevention of Neural Tube Defects:  
<http://www.aap.org/policy/re9834.html>

Mayo Clinic Using vitamin and mineral supplements wisely  
(There is quite a bit of information in this article, if you are  
considering taking vitamin supplements, read this article first.):  
<http://www.mayoclinic.com/invoke.cfm?id=NU00198>

Harvard School of Public Health Vitamins:  
<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/vitamins.html>

### Author Information:

Need help getting a balanced diet with plenty of vitamins?

Come and visit the NutriCounter web site

<http://www.nutricounter.com> and find  
out how you can learn to eat healthier.

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### Ways to Maximize Vitamin Absorption

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**By Nitin Jain**

1. Do not refrigerate vegetables and fruits (raw and uncut) for more than two days.
2. Do not go by the advertisements that show refrigeration slowing down loss of nutrients from fruit. It can't stop the process altogether and fruits certainly do not get any fresher by refrigerating them for a long time.
3. Eat your fruits whole rather than cutting them into pieces. When exposed to air (oxygen), vital vitamins are lost. By that logic, raw fruits are better than fruit juices and pies.
4. Take a sunbath around nine am for 15–20 minutes and you do not need to pop any vitamin D supplements, except if otherwise advised by a medical practitioner.
5. Give full attention to food while eating rather than sharing the meal with your favorite soap on TV, so that your parasympathetic nervous system is dominant and the digestive system works to its optimum level.

All about Vitamin Supplements –

Nitin Jain – for

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Your complete guide to buying vitamins online –

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Ways to Maximize Vitamin Absorption

Vitamin Supplement

The Effectiveness of Vitamin C

Vitamin Supplements For Seniors: What Should You Take?

How useful are Vitamins?

101 tips to stay fit and live longer.

30–Day Low Carb Diet 'Ketosis Plan'

How To Overcome Dandruff

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