

Monthly Wellness SpotLight by PSA

IN GOOD HEALTH

ALL ABOUT VITAMINS AND MINERALS

Many of us wonder if we are getting enough vitamins and minerals and/or if we should use supplements. Vitamins and minerals are vital to our health and our bodies functioning properly, but there is a fine line between getting enough and getting too much. The best way to get enough of these nutrients is eating a healthy, well-balanced diet, but often life gets in the way, and as a result, we don't eat healthy, we skip meals, and we snack too much!

Micronutrients

Vitamins and minerals are often called micronutrients because our bodies only need a very small amount of them. Despite that fact, micronutrient deficiencies including the below may develop:

- Scurvy: Vitamin C Deficiency
- Blindness: Vitamin A Deficiency
- Rickets: Vitamin D deficiency

Vitamins vs. Minerals

Vitamins and minerals are different. Vitamins are organic and can be destroyed by heat, air, or acid. Minerals are inorganic and are held onto their structure. So, minerals in soil and water easily find their way into your body through what you consume, like plants, fish, animals, and fluids. It's harder to get vitamins into your body because cooking, storage, and exposure to air can destroy them.

Water Soluble Vitamins

Water soluble vitamins are found in the liquid portions of the food we eat, and they are easily absorbed into our bloodstream. Our kidneys regulate the amount in our body and get rid of the excess in urine. Water soluble vitamins include the B Vitamins and Vitamin C. These vitamins provide our bodies with energy, keep our tissues and cells healthy, and help us fight infection. It's a good idea to replenish water soluble vitamins every few days; however, too much of these vitamins may be harmful. For example, too much B6 can damage nerves leading to numbness and muscle weakness.

Fat Soluble Vitamins

As easy as it is for water soluble vitamins to enter our bodies, fat soluble vitamins need to go through our lymph nodes or our intestines, and they often need proteins to carry them. Excess is stored in the liver and fat tissues. Fat soluble vitamins include Vitamin A, Vitamin D, Vitamin E, and Vitamin K. They help us build bones, protect vision, and protect our body against disease. Because fat soluble vitamins can be stored in your body for long period of time, toxic levels can build up. This usually happens if you are taking supplements, as it's hard to get too much from the food you eat.

Major Minerals

Our bodies need large amounts of the major minerals. One of the main tasks of the major minerals is to maintain the proper balance of water in the body. Sodium and chloride are in charge of this. Calcium, Phosphorus, and Magnesium are important for healthy bones. Sulfur helps our hair, skin, and nails.

Trace Minerals

Even though they are found in our bodies in extremely small amounts, they are no less important than the major minerals. Important trace minerals include chromium, copper, fluoride, iodine, iron, manganese, molybdenum, selenium, and zinc. Trace minerals are important for multiple tasks in our body. Iron helps our body carry oxygen, fluoride strengthens bone and helps our teeth stay healthy, zinc helps our blood clot, and copper helps with iron metabolism. Other trace minerals protect our cells.

Before You Start Taking Supplements...

The level of vitamins and minerals in your body is important. Before starting a supplement (or if you are already taking any), be sure to speak to your health care provider for direction. You may even want to ask for a blood test to find out if you have any deficiencies.