

Vitamins and Minerals for Children



Highlights

Vitamins and minerals are essential for keeping your child healthy. A balanced diet is the best way for your child to get enough vitamins and minerals. If you're concerned about your child's diet, consult a doctor or dietitian.

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Importance of Vitamins and Minerals

Vitamins and minerals play a crucial role in your child's health. They are important for growth and development. They are sometimes called micronutrients

because only small amounts are needed in the diet.

The best way for your child to get enough vitamins and minerals is through a healthy diet.

Encourage your child to eat a variety of foods from the five food groups each day:

Plenty of vegetables \ (different colors and types, including beans\)

Fruit

Whole grain foods \ (bread, cereals, rice, pasta, noodles, polenta, couscous, oats, quinoa, barley\)

Lean meats, poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts, seeds, and beans

Dairy products like milk, yogurt, cheese, or alternatives

Make sure your child drinks plenty of water. After the age of 2, you can offer reduced-fat milk.

The amount of food your child needs from each food group will depend on their age, sex, and level of physical activity.

Essential Vitamins for Your Child

Children need vitamins for healthy growth. Most vitamins come from food.

Key Minerals for Your Child

In addition to vitamins, children need minerals for healthy growth. Minerals like calcium, iron, and zinc are essential for developing strong bones and teeth, and for supporting overall health.

Causes of Vitamin and Mineral Deficiency

A vitamin or mineral deficiency can occur if your child does not consume enough vitamins or minerals over a long period of time \ (usually months\). Symptoms can vary depending on the deficiency.

Special Diets and Nutritional Needs

There are many reasons your child might have a special diet, including:

- Personal beliefs
- Health conditions
- Food preferences

Children on a special diet may need additional vitamins or minerals. It's a good idea to speak with a dietitian if your child follows a special diet.

Vegetarian diet:A vegetarian child can still get all the necessary vitamins and minerals if they consume dairy products and eggs as part of a healthy, balanced diet.

Vegan diet:If your child follows a vegan diet, you will need to carefully plan their meals. Vitamin B12 is a key vitamin that cannot be obtained from a vegan diet, as it is only found in animal products. Some soy-based foods have added vitamin B12, but it is common for vegans to take a vitamin B12 supplement.

Other minerals that can be difficult to obtain on a vegan diet include:

- Iron
- Zinc
- Calcium

These can be found in foods like legumes, tofu, nuts, seeds, and calcium-enriched soy and other plant-based drinks. Consult with a dietitian to ensure your child's diet provides all the nutrients they need for healthy growth.

Food allergies and intolerances:Food allergies and intolerances may make it more difficult for your child to get all the necessary vitamins and minerals. It's best to consult with a doctor or dietitian to ensure your child is getting a well-balanced diet.

When to Consult a Doctor

Consult with your doctor if you're concerned about your child's growth and

development. A dietitian can also check that your child is receiving all the necessary vitamins and minerals.

The Role of Supplements in Your Child's Diet

If you plan to give your child vitamin or mineral supplements, make sure to:

Read the label carefully

Follow the instructions for use

Possible harm from supplements: Some supplements can have side effects or interact with other medications. It's important to inform your doctor and pharmacist if your child is taking any supplements.

Supplements should not replace a balanced diet. Relying on supplements while consuming a poor diet, such as junk food, does not make the diet healthy. Also, supplements can be expensive, and too much of certain vitamins and minerals can be harmful if the body cannot process them.

Tools and Assistance

Pediatrician or General Practitioner: Consult a pediatrician or general practitioner for general health concerns and growth monitoring of your child.

Registered Dietitian: Speak with a registered dietitian for personalized advice on your child's diet, especially if they have specific dietary needs or restrictions.

Trusted Websites and Resources: Use trusted online resources like government health websites or nutrition-based organizations for reliable information on child nutrition and dietary needs.