



HEALTH UPDATE

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Do You Need a Multivitamin/Mineral Supplement?

Nutrition experts agree that the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the MyPyramid food guide offer a reliable and easy-to-follow plan for healthful eating. Eating according to these tools is the best way to get all the vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients you need. Challenge yourself with the following quiz to rate your eating habits.

On most days do you:

Eat at least 6 ounces of grains (breads, cereal, rice, pasta, and other grain foods)?

One ounce equals one slice of bread, ½ cup of cooked rice or pasta, 1 cup of cereal, or half of a medium-sized bagel.

Yes = 3

No = 0

Eat at least 2 cups of fruit? One cup equals 1 piece of fruit, a handful of grapes or berries, ½ cup of dried fruit, or 1 cup (8 ounces) of 100% fruit juice.

Yes = 3

No = 0

Eat at least 2½ cups of vegetables? One cup equals 1 cup of cooked or chopped vegetables; 2 cups of raw, leafy vegetables; or 1 cup (8 ounces) of vegetable juice.

Yes = 3

No = 0

Consume at least 3 cups of dairy foods such as milk, cheese, and yogurt? One cup equals 1 cup (8 ounces) of milk or yogurt, 1½ ounces of natural cheese, or 2 ounces of processed cheese.

Yes = 3

No = 0

Eat at least 5½ ounces of lean meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, or nuts? One ounce equals 1 ounce of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish; 1 egg; ½ ounce of nuts or seeds; ¼ cup of beans; ¼ cup (2 ounces) tofu; or 1 tablespoon of peanut butter.

Yes = 3

No = 0

Consume at least 6 teaspoons of oils? Oils include those oils that are liquid at room temperature, such as olive, vegetable, or canola oil. Oils are also found in foods like nuts, salmon, tuna, mayonnaise, olives, vinaigrette salad dressings, avocados, and soft margarine.

Yes = 3

No = 0

Frequently skip meals or miss out on one or more food groups for the entire day?

Yes = 0

No = 3

Generally eat the same foods every day?

Yes = 0

No = 3

SCORING:

18 points or more: You're doing a great job! You are making many wise food choices and are getting the variety of foods important to support your health.

12-15 points: You're on your way... You could be getting more nutrients by fine-tuning your food selections. Focus on one or two areas for improvement.

0-9 points: Keep trying! By making small changes, you can gradually improve your eating pattern, one step at a time. Review the Dietary Guidelines and MyPyramid (see references below). While food is the best way to obtain vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients, you may benefit from a multivitamin/mineral supplement if you are unable to consistently eat adequately from each of the food groups.

Selecting a wide variety of foods from each of the food groups helps to ensure you get enough of all the nutrients your body needs. It also provides energy, fiber, and flavor, which can't be found in supplements. However, even people with the best intentions sometimes fall short on their nutrient intake. A vitamin/mineral supplement can offer benefits that are both safe and effective. **A vitamin/mineral supplement may help if:**

- your hectic lifestyle frequently keeps you from eating according to Dietary Guidelines recommendations,
- you are dieting for weight loss,
- you are not eating as much as you should,
- you are a strict vegetarian,
- you can't drink milk or eat cheese and yogurt, or
- you are a woman of child-bearing age who doesn't get enough folate from fruits, vegetables, beans, and grains.

Visit the Office of Health Promotion and meet with a Peer Health Educator or Registered Dietitian to learn more about nutrition. www.virginia.edu/studenthealth/healthpro.html

Dietary Guidelines for Americans: www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines

MyPyramid: www.MyPyramid.gov