




MOM'S
MULTI
MANUAL

EASY TIPS TO HELP
SUPPLEMENT
YOUR DIET

BY MICHAEL A. MILLER



You insure your car, your home, and maybe even your computer because although you strive to keep these possessions pristine, you know you can't ward off every single threat of damage. So why not insure your most important asset—**your health?**

Nutritionists will agree, it's best to derive nutrients from a rich and fruitful diet. But let's not kid ourselves: None of us can be perfect, and the deck might be stacked against us. Chronic disease is up; processed foods, artificial flavorings, and pounds upon pounds of sugar have made their way into our diets; and even when we take the high road and choose veggies, it may be an inferior product. A study in the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* compared 43 garden crops from 1950 to 1999, finding a decline in protein, calcium, iron, riboflavin, phosphorous, and vitamin C. Throw in pesticides, air pollutants, and a sedentary lifestyle, and all of a sudden it sounds smart to have not just one vitamin sidekick, but multiple.

A multivitamin is not an anti-cancer hero or an excuse to wrinkle your nose at the veggies staring back at you. Instead, it should fill the inevitable holes in your nutrition profile. Maybe you are partial to pretty pink Himalayan salt. Guess what—it doesn't contain iodine, an essential mineral for women. You might choose only the finest whole-grain breads for your family—but they aren't fortified with folic acid unless explicitly stated on the packaging. Folate is important for cellular division and crucial during pregnancy. Taking a multivitamin is a smart choice that can fit your individual nutrition needs, which is a long list for women. But first, there are

some considerations to mull over.

FOOD OVER FABRICATION

This is an enduring topic among nutritionists that has spawned lively debate, but most will agree that food-based nutrients are best. To boil it down, some synthetic vitamins may be difficult to metabolize and benefit from. According to the Organic Consumers Association, synthetic vitamins lack the absorption-improving co-factors and minerals that are inherent in natural, complete vitamins. The body then has to tap into its own reserves to “build” a complete vitamin before it can make use of it. This process causes an overall depletion in the body—the opposite effect you were going for—and when its reserves are used up, synthetic vitamins are unconvertible and excreted from the body unused. Vitamin E, for example, has eight forms and is so complex it's best to derive them and all their co-factors from natural sources. Other vitamins, such as ascorbic acid, or vitamin C, will be treated the same by your body no matter how natural or synthetic.

LABEL FABLES

Flashy advertising claims and promises of near immortality are all smoke and mirrors. Limited-time offers and claims of instant cures for chronic disease are likely too good to be true. If you could have heard it on an infomercial, stay away. You should also be conscious of attractive food and herb ingredients on the

EDITOR-APPROVED MULTIS

While we can't formulate a multivitamin plan based on everyone's specific health needs, our editors scoured the options out there for the best, most trusted brands. These food-based multivitamins won't lead you astray.



RAINBOW LIGHT

You get the whole shebang with Rainbow Light's Women's One supplement. Filled to the brim with antioxidants, herbs, and superfoods on top of essential vitamins and minerals, you'll have every reason to be confident in your health. // rainbowlight.com



AMERICAN HEALTH

The More Than A Multiple Woman's Multivitamin plucks its vitamins from real food, being careful to preserve the synergistic effect of natural, complex compounds in their natural food states. // americanhealthus.com



MEGAFOOD

MegaFood separated the bulky bone boosters from this potent multi for a sleeker pill. It's packed with food-state vitamins and minerals for metabolism, endocrine function, skin, hair, and nails, and more. But be sure to get calcium and magnesium from your diet or another supplement. // megafood.com

nutrition panel. Yes, a 50-mg serving of blueberry extract sounds amazing, but how much antioxidantizing power are you really getting out of that single blueberry? Probably not enough to justify the extra pain your wallet is feeling.

MEGA NEGATIVE

When it comes to dosage, don't jump on the mega-dose bandwagon. Many nutrients, which are crucial in the correct amounts, can lead to deleterious effects if abused, especially if you are pregnant or breastfeeding. What's more, certain vitamins and minerals have specific interactions between each other and with pharmaceuticals. Do your research and ask your health care provider before including a new supplement in your diet.

A good women's multivitamin will include nutrients to support breast and heart health, as well as healthy reproductive organs, digestion, bones, and skin. Here are just a few vitamins and minerals that stand out for their benefits for women. We wouldn't be at all surprised if the multivitamin that's right for you contains several or all of these superstar goodies.

A IS FOR ANTIOXIDANT

Vitamin A is a fat-soluble antioxidant that helps fight infection and promotes nighttime vision when stored as retinol behind the eyes. Yet, it also serves a motherly function. "Vitamin A is important for the proper expression of our genes and is necessary during pregnancy for ensuring the healthy formation of the baby's heart, eyes, ears, arms, and legs," writes Tieraona Low Dog, MD, in *Fortify Your Life*. Not stopping there, vitamin A continues to be essential for moms and their babies after birth. In one study, beta-carotene, a plant-derived form of vitamin A, was given to lactating mothers and found to increase their breast milk carotenoid serum levels by up to 400 percent.

Are there any women interested in lustrous hair, nails, and skin? We

thought so. Powerhouse antioxidant vitamin E can get the job done. As a bonus, vitamin E might improve heart and reproductive health, as well as protect vitamin A from oxidation in the body, according to Dr. Low Dog.

PRO TIP: Preformed vitamin A, the active form that the body can use, carries a warning tag: According to the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, evidence suggests more than 3,000 mcg of vitamin A could cause hip fractures, less effective usage of vitamin D, and birth defects if you are pregnant.

B A FAMILY

The group of B vitamins includes B₁, B₂, B₃, B₅, B₆, B₇, B₉, and B₁₂, and may offer a host of invaluable benefits such as reduced risk of heart disease, and improvements in cognition, metabolism, and stress management. Most multivitamins contain the whole group in a potent form called B-complex that improves the efficacy of each, but three Bs stand out for women in particular: B₆, B₉ (aka folate), and B₁₂.

According to the CDC, women are almost two times more likely to be deficient in vitamin B₆ than men in the US. This is unfortunate because vitamin B₆ may reduce PMS symptoms and quell morning sickness during pregnancy, especially once iron and vitamin B₆ levels begin to drop in the second trimester. Folate is a key player in cellular functions, specifically making, protecting, and repairing DNA. If folate is missing and cellular division is hindered during pregnancy, risk of neural tube defects (NTDs) is increased—you might recognize them as spina bifida and anencephaly. Vitamin B₁₂ serves as an extension of folate's role in DNA maintenance, and some researchers believe it may be a deterrent of breast cancer. Mature women will want to keep this one in mind, as low levels of B₁₂ have also been associated with dementia, and folate can mask vitamin B₁₂ deficiency.

PRO TIP: The FDA requires that enriched wheat flour be fortified with folic acid (a synthesized form of folate) in the US, so it is wise to cross-check your supplementation with your consumption of cereal and wheat products.

IODIZED IQ

While the B vitamins are busy building the cellular structure of precious, new lives, iodine is ticking the boxes in the cognitive department. Iodine is essential to produce thyroid hormone, which is necessary for babies' nerve and cognitive development before birth. It is not synthesized by the body, and without it, pregnant women risk stillbirth, spontaneous miscarriage, or even cretinism in severe cases, according to Dr. Low Dog.

As iodine consumption drops due to the proliferation of non iodized salt and avoidance of salt altogether, breast cancer rates have risen, according to breastcancerchoices.org. Research shows iodine desensitizes estrogen receptors in the breasts, reduces fibrocystic breast disease, and destroys cancer cells.

In 2013, Jorge Flechas, MD, studied the effects of iodine on his employees. Sixteen pregnant women in his practice were taking iodine for fibrocystic breast disease but Dr. Flechas was contemplating discontinuation of the iodine supplement for the health of the babies. Then it occurred to him that Japanese women ingest around 13.5 grams of iodine daily and no harm comes to their children. He had the women in his practice take a slightly lower dose, 12.5 grams of iodine daily, for the duration of their pregnancy—and the results were spectacular. Out of 16 children, all 16 are geniuses. The oldest, 11 at the time, was plowing through sixth grade and making straight As on a college-level English course.

C IS FOR CALCIUM

Surprise! Calcium is good for your bones. Ninety-nine percent of

OMEGA MOM

If you're not taking omega-3 fatty acids via fish oil, maybe you should be. The polyunsaturated fats work miracles for your bones, heart, cognition, and mood, and may reduce cancer and diabetes risk.

We hope you don't need any more convincing, but just in case, omega-3s aren't out of tricks yet. Long chain omega-3s, EPA and DHA, are essential during pregnancy for their support of fetal brain and nervous system development, delivery outcomes, breast milk nutrition, and the mood of post-partum Mom. Throughout childhood, EPA and DHA continue to positively affect behavior, focus, mood, immunity, and body composition, according to Aimée Gould Shunney, ND, a member of Nordic Naturals' advisory board.

EPA has been shown to be excellent mood support and a valuable tool against depression, including post-partum depression. However, DHA might be the showoff of the pair during pregnancy, as it is more closely related with eye, brain, and nervous system development. DHA is concentrated in the brain where it accumulates up to age 18 and has been shown to provide improved visual and cognitive function.

"Most women are deficient in DHA coming into pregnancy, and will get more depleted during pregnancy as the fetus takes what it needs. Depletion persists 9 to 12 months post-partum," said Dr. Shunney. Yet, according to Dr. Shunney, most prenatal supplements are devoid of DHA. Therefore, it's important to find one that isn't, or supplement with fish oil. "When choosing a fish oil, it is crucial to keep purity and freshness in mind. To that end, remember that the only objective proof of fish oil purity and freshness is third-party analysis that verifies adherence to strict standards," added Dr. Shunney.

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NUTRIENT DAILY VALUES

We completely agree that the best place to score nutrient goodness is through a healthy diet—but, have you ever considered how much you'd have to chow down to get everything from food? This list of nutrients and their Daily Values illustrates exactly that.

Vitamin A	5,000 IU	¼ cup carrots, chopped
Vitamin C	60 mg	0.6 cup broccoli, cooked and chopped
Calcium	1,000 mg	2.85 cups milk
Iron	18 mg	4.2 cups chickpeas
Vitamin D	400 IU	2.1 ounces sockeye salmon, cooked
Vitamin E	30 IU	5.3 cups cooked spinach
Vitamin K	80 µg	0.7 cup cooked kale
Thiamin	1.5 mg	34 ounces rainbow trout, cooked
Riboflavin	1.7 mg	46 ounces lamb breast, cooked
Niacin	20 mg	1.7 cups sunflower seeds
Pantothenic acid	10 mg	3 cups avocados
Vitamin B ₆	2 mg	13.5 ounces tuna, cooked
Folate	400 µg	5.7 cups asparagus
Vitamin B ₁₂	6 µg	1.9 cups clams
Phosphorus	1,000 mg	1.7 cups cheddar cheese
Iodine	50 µg	4.5 ounces cod, baked
Magnesium	400 mg	1.2 cups black beans
Zinc	15 mg	50 g chicken breast
Selenium	70 µg	3.7 g Brazil nuts
Copper	2 mg	50 g sesame seeds
Manganese	2 mg	1.3 cups pineapple
Chromium	120 µg	5.5 cups broccoli
Choline	425 mg*	3 eggs

*Recognition of choline is relatively new, thus, it does not have an established Daily Value. The Adequate Intake for adult women is 425 mg. Sources: FDA, USDA, Oregon State University Linus Pauling Institute, and Dr. Low Dog



calcium is stored in your bones and teeth where it supports structure and function. The remaining one percent is tightly regulated by the body in the bloodstream and supports muscle function, nerve transmission, hormonal secretion, and possibly PMS symptom reduction. “Several studies have shown that calcium supplementation reduces mood swings, irritability, breast tenderness, and sugar cravings,” writes Dr. Low Dog.

PRO TIP: While it's easy for calcium to steal the thunder, it's important to get enough magnesium and vitamins D₃ and K₂ to ensure proper absorption of calcium in the bones.

CHOLINE

Research shows choline is linked to fetal and infant brain development and reduced risk of NTDs. It's so important, in fact, that the FDA requires infant formulas to include choline. According to Dr. Low Dog, most women are very low in choline, yet very few prenatal multivitamins include this vital nutrient. Choline's laundry list of additional benefits further begs the question why supplements so often dismiss this nutrient: Studies have associated it with reduced risk of breast cancer, inflammation, and heart disease. It also supports your own memory and cognition, and is vital for detoxifying your liver. Scientists at the Johns Hopkins Children's Center found that low choline consumption is associated with worse liver scarring in postmenopausal women with non-alcoholic fatty liver disease.

PRO TIP: Choline appears in supplements in a variety of forms. But if you're looking for its cognitive benefits, elect for CDP Choline, as it crosses the blood-brain barrier easier. Remember also to take it with B vitamins, which are instrumental in its conversion to neurotransmitter acetylcholine.

IRON

Iron is responsible for ushering oxygen

to muscles via red blood cells, and iron deficiency is the most common nutritional disorder in the world, according to the World Health Organization. Iron is lost through blood during menstruation, and women have a vastly increased need for iron when red blood cell production spikes during pregnancy. There is a dark side, too. superfluous iron can lead to consequences like diabetes and heart failure, so if you've been through menopause, this one should be off your supplement docket.

PRO TIP: Vitamin A is iron's little helper. Preformed vitamin A helps produce red blood cells and integrate iron into hemoglobin.

WHAT ABOUT THE REST?

The list of nutrients above is not exhaustive, and women should consider taking a complete multivitamin comprised of other vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants as patchwork for their diet. But how do you know if you're deficient? Doctor Low Dog suggests keeping a food journal to test for what you're getting already. Then you can employ simple math to solve for which nutrients your body is clamoring for and how much you need to supplement: $RDA - Diet = Supplement$. Simply subtract what you are getting from what you should be getting and you'll end up with what you still need. For a thorough study of your own intake, you'll need to learn the lingo:


Upper limit, or UL, is the maximum amount of a particular nutrient across dietary and supplemental sources that will not pose health risks, according to the Food and Nutrition Board.

Recommended daily allowance, or RDA, represents the amount of a vitamin or mineral that the Food and Nutrition Board considers sufficient for one day's ingestion based on age, gender, and whether a woman is pregnant or breastfeeding. It is not to

be confused with daily value, or DV, which is a single number established by the FDA for all adults.

Adequate Intake: When research on a nutrient is too insubstantial to designate an RDA, an Adequate Intake (AI) value is often prescribed. The AI is the recommended average daily intake level based on observed or experimentally determined approximations of nutrient intake by a group of apparently healthy people, according to the USDA.

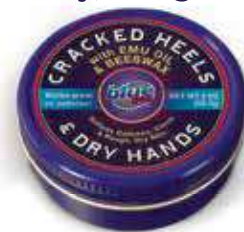
International units, or IU, are used to measure fat-soluble vitamins A, D, and E and are convertible to micrograms or milligrams, depending on the vitamin.

Vitamins are integral to our vitality and many are not synthesized by our bodies, making it imperative to source them through our diet and, realistically, a multivitamin. They are responsible for metabolism, energy function, DNA protection, disease prevention, and a host of other invaluable benefits. A healthy diet always comes first, but with these tips, you'll be able to optimize your nutrition to meet your needs, and rest easy knowing that your health has an insurance plan, just like your shiny, red convertible. 



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