

Eating Well for Seniors

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service • Oklahoma State University



VITAMIN AND MINERAL SUPPLEMENTS

- Vitamin and mineral supplements have their place in the medical treatment of certain nutrition-related diseases. However, growing older doesn't mean you need extra vitamins or minerals above a well-balanced diet. Americans waste millions of dollars on vitamin and mineral supplements they do not need.
- Following the Food Guide Pyramid and choosing from a variety of foods can provide all the nutrients for a well-balanced diet. However, many older adults do not consume healthy diets. Other physical, psychological and social factors can lower food intake, putting them at nutritional risk.
- It is still debatable whether older adults should routinely take vitamin or mineral supplements. However, taking large doses (amounts far greater than the recommended dietary allowance, or RDA) is clearly **not** recommended without specific medical advice. Vitamin or minerals taken in large amounts can be dangerous. Overdoses happen easier with supplements than with food. Vitamins and minerals in large amounts can be toxic. Because nutrients interact with each other, a balance of all nutrients is important. If the body has too much or too little of any nutrient, it can affect how the body uses other nutrients.
- Vitamin or mineral supplements can not make up for a poor diet. No supplement contains all the essential nutrients needed. Good health depends on a well-balanced diet from a variety of foods. The keys to good nutrition are variety and moderation. The greater the variety of foods, the less likely a deficiency or excess of any one vitamin or mineral will occur.



Suggested Readings:

Oklahoma State University Extension Fact Sheets:

T-3122, *Vitamin and Mineral Supplements*

T-3149, *Nutrition in Later Years*

T-3156, *Vitamins and the Body*

T-3164, *Minerals and the Body*

Reference List:

Schlenker, E.D. (1993) *Nutrition in Aging*, 2nd Ed. St. Louis, MO: Mosby Year Book Inc.

Ahmed, F.E. (1992) *Effect of nutrition on health of the elderly*. J. Am. Diet. Assoc. 92: 1102: 1108.

National Research Council. (1989) *Recommended Dietary Allowances*, 10th Ed. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.



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