



# Nutrition



## Vitamins & Supplements



### Why do we need vitamins?

Vitamins and minerals play many important roles in our bodies. They help us break down other foods; keep our skin, bones and eyes healthy; and help our immune system function properly.

### Do people with HIV/AIDS have special needs for vitamins?

- ☛ Some people with HIV/AIDS have low levels of certain vitamins and minerals. This may be due to not taking enough of the vitamins or not being able to absorb them from the food they eat.
- ☛ Vitamin deficiencies common in people with HIV/AIDS include: vitamin A, B1, B6, B12, C, E and folate.
- ☛ Mineral deficiencies common in people with HIV/AIDS include: iron, selenium, magnesium and zinc.
- ☛ People with lower-than-normal levels of vitamin A, the B vitamins, vitamin E and the mineral selenium have been found to get sick faster than those with normal levels of these vitamins and minerals.



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**Decisions about particular medical treatments should always be made in consultation with a qualified medical practitioner knowledgeable about HIV-related illness and the treatments in question.**

## Vitamins and Supplements

### How do I get enough vitamins and minerals?

- ☛ The best source of vitamins and minerals is from the food you eat. Eating a variety of foods, including vegetables and fruits of different colours, will give you a good source of vitamins and minerals.
- ☛ If you have good diet but are still low in some minerals and vitamins, you may take them as supplements in the form of pills or injections.

Examples of food rich in vitamins and minerals:

- **vitamin A:** milk, cheese, dark green vegetables, liver
  - **beta-carotene** (changes to vitamin A): dark green vegetables, oranges, vegetables and fruits that are orange in colour (such as papaya)
  - **vitamin B1** (thiamine): meat, nuts, grains, liver
  - **vitamin B2** (riboflavin): dairy products, beans, leafy vegetables
  - **vitamin B6:** meats, beans, nuts, vegetables, bananas
  - **vitamin B12:** meats, soy products
  - **biotin:** egg yolks, fish, beans
  - **folate:** meats, beans, broccoli, leafy vegetables, cantaloupe
  - **niacin:** chicken, fish, peanuts, dried beans
  - **vitamin C:** citrus fruits, dark green vegetables, bell peppers, tomatoes
  - **vitamin D:** sunshine (be sure to wear sun block), milk
  - **vitamin E:** plant oils, leafy vegetables, nuts, seeds
  - **copper:** oysters, peas, beans, organ meats
  - **iron:** meat, peas, beans, grains, eggs, fish, liver
  - **selenium:** seafood, egg yolks, grains
  - **magnesium:** nuts, grains, dark green vegetables
  - **zinc:** seafood, grains, liver
- ☛ Taking too much of a vitamin can be harmful and can cause side effects as well. Some vitamins do not mix well with certain medications. You should talk to a dietitian or your doctor about which vitamin and mineral supplements to take.



## Vitamins and Supplements

### General nutritional recommendations on vitamins and minerals:

- ☛ 2 multivitamins per day
- ☛ 400 I.U. (international units) of vitamin E per day if you are taking AZT or have high cholesterol or triglycerides
- ☛ 500-1,000 mg vitamin C per day if you are a smoker, have an infection or have high cholesterol or triglycerides
- ☛ 1 vitamin B complex each day
- ☛ eat plenty of fruit and vegetables each day
- ☛ drink 8 cups of water, juice or drinks without caffeine

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This information is also available in Chinese, Tagalog and Vietnamese

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