

Functions and Food Sources of Some Common Minerals

Information about Some Common Minerals

Minerals are essential nutrients that are needed in small amounts to keep you healthy. Minerals do not give you energy or calories, but can help with other functions in your body. Your body does not make minerals. To meet your daily needs, minerals must be obtained through your diet. Most people can meet their mineral needs by following "Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide" (CFG) and by eating a variety of healthy foods. This means choosing foods from all four food groups: vegetables and fruit, grain products, milk and alternatives as well as meat and alternatives. Aim to meet the minimum number of servings for each food group every day.

Steps You Can Take

Mineral	Function	Common Food Sources
Calcium	Builds bones and teeth and helps keep them strong Slows down bone loss as you get older Helps muscles like your heart work properly	Milk, cheese, yogurt, calcium fortified non-dairy beverages, tofu with added calcium Canned sardines and salmon with the bones, tofu with added calcium Calcium-fortified orange juice
Iron	Carries oxygen to all parts of your body Prevents you from feeling tired	Meat, fish, poultry, firm tofu, dried beans, peas, like soybeans, chickpeas, split pea, lentils, nuts and seeds, organ meats such as liver and heart Iron fortified grain products like flour, bread, pasta and breakfast cereal Blackstrap molasses
Magnesium	Keeps nerves and muscles strong Helps form bones and teeth	Spinach and swiss chard Bran cereals and wheat germ Dried beans, peas and lentils such as black, navy, chickpeas, nuts and seeds such as almonds, cashews, pumpkin, sunflower and flax seeds



<p>Potassium</p>	<p>Keeps fluids balanced in blood and tissue</p> <p>Helps in controlling blood pressure</p> <p>Allows nerves and muscles to work together</p>	<p>Bananas, papaya, sweet potato, dark leafy greens, avocado, prune juice, tomato juice, orange juice</p> <p>Milk, yogurt</p> <p>Dried beans such as navy, pinto and black beans, chickpeas, lentils, beef, pork, fish, nuts and seeds such as pistachio, almonds, pumpkin, flax and sunflower seeds</p>
<p>Zinc</p>	<p>Needed for growth and development</p> <p>Maintains a healthy immune system</p> <p>Important for wound healing</p> <p>Helps the body use other nutrients</p>	<p>Yogurt, milk, cheese</p> <p>Dried beans like adzuki, kidney, navy, pinto and soybeans, lentils, pumpkin seeds and sunflower seeds, liver, meat, poultry, fish and seafood.</p>

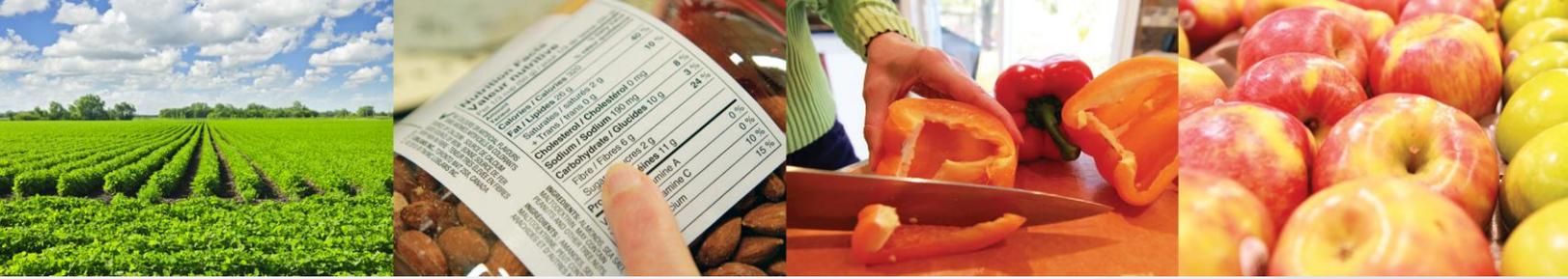
Steps for Special Consideration

Some minerals need the help of other nutrients to perform their functions well in your body. These include:

Calcium: Vitamin D helps you to absorb the calcium from foods. Vitamin D is found in fortified milk and soy or rice beverages, eggs, fish (for example salmon and tuna), and organ meats like liver and heart. You don't need to take the vitamin D at the same time as the calcium but it is important to get vitamin D each day.

Iron: Plant sources of iron are not as easily absorbed as animal sources. Choosing vitamin C rich foods at the same time as plant sources of iron will help you to absorb more iron from the plant foods. Vitamin C rich foods include citrus fruits, tomatoes, potatoes, sweet peppers and strawberries. For example the vitamin C in tomatoes will help your body absorb iron from beans in a vegetarian chilli.

Most people can meet their mineral needs through a healthy diet. Certain people need extra minerals in the form of a supplement, in addition to following the CFG. These include:



Calcium: If you have osteoporosis, you need 1200 milligrams (mg)/day of calcium. In addition to following CFG you may also need a supplement to meet your needs. Don't get more than 2000 mg of calcium from and supplements per day. It is important to make sure that you also get 800-2000 IU of vitamin D per day to help you absorb the calcium.

Iron: Pregnant women need extra iron in order to meet their own and their baby's needs. Most women find it hard to get enough iron from food and would benefit from an iron supplement of 16-20 mg per day during pregnancy (the amount usually found in prenatal supplements).

Taking minerals in large doses may cause harm. Iron supplements are especially harmful for children and should be kept out of their reach at all times.

Additional Resources:

Health Canada, Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide- www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide

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