

Health and Wellness:

Smart Food Choices

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With all the food choices, most people need to consider what the body needs more and think twice about what it wants.

For the almost 70% of Americans who are overweight, as many as 40% are deficient in vitamins A, B12, C, D3 and E as well as calcium and magnesium. This is important because high-calorie foods are not necessarily high in nutrients and vitamins. The challenge is to incorporate and enjoy good nutritionally-

value-laden foods into your regular diet. To offset deficiencies, a good quality capsule (not tablet) multivitamin can be helpful. One overarching theme to make smart food choices is to eat fruit in the morning and veggies for lunch and a protein and more veggies for dinner. While there's probably room for everyone to improve, here are consumption suggestions with specific vitamins in mind:

1. Vitamin A – Assists organs function better, helps bone growth and preserves vision.

Find Vitamin A in fish, veggies, dairy products and meat.

2. Vitamin B12 –Provides an incredible powerhouse so that your nerves and red blood cells stay healthy and several body processes function smoothly. Examples of those body processes are healthy regulation of the digestive and nervous systems (to reduce depression, stress and brain shrinkage). All joking aside, who couldn't use some assistance in that department? Vitamin B12 also improves unhealthy cholesterol levels which protect against stroke and high blood pressure to ultimately protect against heart disease. As if that weren't enough, B12 helps protect against breast, colon, lung and prostate cancer, and it facilitates with cell reproduction and skin renewal which are essential for healthy skin, hair and nails. Lastly, fatigue and/or lethargy can result when this is a Vitamin B12 deficiency.

Find Vitamin B12 in liver (I know not everyone likes liver but don't fret - there are enough other choices): meat, eggs, milk, cheese and some varieties of fish. Some people need to take B12 sublingually (dissolves under the tongue) and this author is one of those people.

3. Vitamin C – Helps to keep skin resilient through collagen production, Vitamin C is also instrumental for the body's membranes from the adrenal glands (which are responsible for how your body reacts to stress) to the heart (which controls blood pressure). Taking Vitamin C has prior to a cold's symptoms appearing has been proven to reduce its length.

Find Vitamin C in citrus fruits cantaloupe and sweet potatoes.

4. Vitamin D3 – Promotes calcium absorption and aids bone growth. Taking the correct dosage of Vitamin D3 is an inexpensive way to help ward off a long list of diseases which include every system in the body including Alzheimer's, other neurological, autoimmune, diabetes and heart disease. Sadly, 64% of Americans are Vitamin D deficient but Vitamin D is highly protective against many lethal diseases.

Find Vitamin D3 in sunlight, fortified milk, OJ, fatty fish (e.g., salmon, trout and tuna).

5. Vitamin E – Provides protection from invading bacteria and viruses. Vitamin E also widens blood vessels which keeps blood from clotting which is thought to prevent hardening of the arteries.

Find Vitamin E in almonds, avocados, leafy green vegetables, peanuts, Swiss chard and sunflower seeds.

6. Calcium –Builds bones and performs many other useful functions such as helps blood clot.

Find Calcium in milk, cheese, yogurt, fruit juices, fortified cereals, broccoli, kale, canned sardines and salmon.

7. Magnesium – Assists with over 300 chemical reactions in the body including helping the heart muscle function better and protecting blood vessels. Magnesium is thought to reduce the risk of developing diabetes.

Find Magnesium in broccoli, dark chocolate, edamame, legumes, squash and whole grains.



Vitamin Testing / Conclusion

Many doctors do not include vitamin levels testing in their usual care. If your doctor doesn't do it, and won't do it at your suggestion, find a doctor who will. If you eat as well as you can and still cannot raise your vitamin levels within normal range, it's time to start taking good-quality vitamins. Getting your annual vitamin level results could just be what you need to stay away from the doctor! While everyone wants to look great, that's just bonus points for eating right. While our bodies are truly amazing, I hope that you do your part to get and stay well. Keeping healthy is a huge reward for doing everything within your power to hopefully live a long and active life.

This is a very cursory overview on this topic. To learn more, here are a few links to get you started:

- (1) <http://www.newsmax.com/FastFeatures/health-benefits-of-vitamin/2014/09/30/id/387945/#ixzz3VvOtCSpZ>
- (2) <http://www.lef.org/Magazine/2013/8/The-Overlooked-Importance-of-Vitamin-D-Receptors/Page-01>
- (3) <http://www.clevelandclinicwellness.com/food/smartfoodchoices/Pages/introduction.aspx#>

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