

Should you get your nutrients from food or from supplements?

The fresh food you eat is loaded with nutrients necessary for good health, such as magnesium, calcium, and vitamins A and C. But many adults aren't getting enough nutrients from their diets.

The typical American diet is heavy in nutrient-poor processed foods, refined grains, and added sugars—all linked to inflammation and chronic disease. Yet even if you eat a healthy, well-balanced diet, you may still fall short of needed nutrients.

Can a supplement make up the difference? It's a touchy subject, and you need to look at your individual needs first.

Dietary supplements would seem to be the obvious way to plug gaps in your diet. But taking too much can actually harm you. You can get too much of a particular nutrient without realizing it. For example, extra vitamin A supplements can lead to dangerous, toxic levels if taken too frequently.

It is recommended that you try to improve your diet before you use supplements. That's because nutrients are most potent when they come from food. Additionally, they are accompanied by many nonessential but beneficial nutrients, such as hundreds of carotenoids, flavonoids, minerals, and antioxidants that aren't in most supplements.

Plus, food tastes better and is often less expensive than adding supplements. Work with a dietitian, and try to get a sense of what's missing from your diet and what changes might be considered.

If you are unable to make dietary changes, or if you have a genuine deficiency in a particular nutrient, a supplement may be helpful.

If you are advised by your healthcare practitioner to take supplements, whole food supplements are most beneficial. Whole food supplements are made from a complex formula that includes botanicals and animal tissue extracts and concentrates, and are prepared in a way that safeguards their nutritional value.



Nutrient	Found in these foods
Vitamin B	Lean beef, turkey, tuna, sunflower seeds, spinach and other leafy greens, eggs
Vitamin D	Salmon, tuna, lean beef, vitamin D-fortified milk and yogurt, fortified orange juice, egg yolk
Iron	Liver, oysters, lean beef, chickpeas, beans, lentils, and sesame seeds
Magnesium	Spinach, kale, and other leafy green vegetables; unrefined grains; and legumes
Calcium	Dairy products, fish such as salmon and sardines, and dark, leafy greens.