

# What are Supplements and Vitamins?

The body needs vitamins and minerals to work well. We can get most of the vitamins and minerals we need from a whole-food diet but sometimes we need to get them by taking supplements. Low vitamin levels can lead to many different health problems. A healthy diet with lots of variety is the best way to get the vitamins and minerals we need. Eating less processed foods is also important.



## WHAT ARE SUPPLEMENTS?

Dietary supplements may contain vitamins, minerals, or herbal medicines. They can be used to compliment a healthy diet or to treat certain health problems.

## WHAT ARE SOME OF THE THINGS SUPPLEMENTS CAN BE USED FOR?

- Correcting vitamin and mineral deficiencies
- Chronic pain
- Helping with bone health
- Improving sleep
- Helping with mild depression and anxiety
- Increasing energy levels



## ARE THERE ANY SIDE EFFECTS OR RISKS?

While obtaining needed vitamins and minerals from diet is safe, taking supplements can sometimes cause problems. Taking too much of a vitamin or mineral can be bad for you. You should check with your health professional to see what dose is right for you.



## WHAT IF I AM ALSO TAKING MEDICATIONS?

Some supplements can cause your body to absorb or break down a medication too fast or too slow. This can change how the medication affects your body. It can stop a medicine from doing what it is supposed to. It can also cause a medicine to have more side effects. This is why

it is important for your health care provider to know of any supplements you are taking. If you start a new supplement and notice new side effects (such as bruising, dizziness, or feeling faint), you should let your healthcare provider know right away.

## HOW DO I FIND A GOOD BRAND?

It can be very hard to figure out which brand of supplements is best for you. Supplements are not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the same way that medications are. You should check with your healthcare provider and ask which type would be best for you. You can also find good information on some supplements through Consumer Reports.

## SHOULD I BE CAUTIOUS ABOUT USING SUPPLEMENTS?

It can be confusing to know which and how much of a vitamin to take. If you are on medications, or have serious health problems, you should definitely talk with your health practitioner before you decide what supplements to take.

For more information, scan the QR code below, or visit [nciph.org/supplements](http://nciph.org/supplements)



