Advantages of Vitamins and Minerals for Human Nutrition

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Vitamins and minerals make people’s bodies work properly. Although you get vitamins and minerals from the foods you eat every day, some foods have more vitamins and minerals than others. Vitamins fall into two categories: fat soluble and water soluble. The fat-soluble vitamins — A, D, E, and K dissolve in fat and can be stored in your body. The water-soluble vitamins — C and the B-complex vitamins (such as vitamins B6, B12, niacin, riboflavin, and folate) — need to dissolve in water before your body can absorb them. Because of this, your body can’t store these vitamins. Any vitamin C or B that your body doesn’t use as it passes through your system is lost (mostly when you pee). So you need a fresh supply of these vitamins every day. Whereas vitamins are organic substances (made by plants or animals), minerals are inorganic elements that come from the soil and water and are absorbed by plants or eaten by animals. Your body needs larger amounts of some minerals, such as calcium, to grow and stay healthy.

Other minerals like chromium, copper, iodine, iron, selenium, and zinc are called trace minerals because you only need very small amounts of them each day. Vitamins and minerals boost the immune system; support normal growth and development, and help cells and organs do their jobs. For example, you’ve probably heard that carrots are good for your eyes. It’s true! Carrots are full of substances called carotenoids that your body converts into vitamin A, which helps prevent eye problems. Another vitamin, vitamin K, helps blood to clot (so cuts and scrapes stop bleeding quickly). You’ll find vitamin K in green leafy vegetables, broccoli, and soybeans. And to have strong bones, you need to eat foods such as milk, yogurt, and green leafy vegetables, which are rich in the mineral calcium.

How to cite this article: Okhee Han “Scenario of Vitamins and Minerals in Present Days”. 10 (2021):5-1.