

Vitamins and Minerals are Essential Nutrients Because they Perform Hundreds of Roles in the Body

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Editorial

Vitamins and minerals are essential nutrients because they perform hundreds of roles in the body. There is a fine line between getting enough of these nutrients (which is healthy) and getting too much (which can end up harming you). Eating a healthy diet remains the best way to get sufficient amounts of the vitamins and minerals you need. Every day, our body produces skin, muscle, and bone. It churns out rich red blood that carries nutrients and oxygen to remote outposts, and it sends nerve signals skipping along thousands of miles of brain and body pathways. It also formulates chemical messengers that shuttle from one organ to another, issuing the instructions that help sustain your life. Vitamins and minerals are considered essential nutrients because acting in concert, they perform hundreds of roles in the body. They help shore up bones, heal wounds, and bolster your immune system. They also convert food into energy, and repair cellular damage. Vitamins and minerals are often called micronutrients because your body needs only tiny amounts of them. Yet failing to get even those small quantities virtually guarantees disease. Here are a few examples of diseases that can result from vitamin deficiencies:

Scurvy: Old-time sailors learned that living for months without fresh fruits or vegetables- the main sources of vitamin C-causes the bleeding gums and listlessness of scurvy.

Blindness: In some developing countries, people still become blind from vitamin A deficiency.

Rickets: A deficiency in vitamin D can cause rickets, a condition marked by soft, weak bones that can lead to skeletal deformities such as bowed legs. Partly to combat rickets, the U.S. has fortified milk with vitamin D since the 1930s. Vitamins and minerals are two of the main types of nutrients that your body needs to survive and stay healthy. Find information on some of the essential vitamins recommended for older adults and how to get the recommended amount within your diet. Vitamins have different jobs to help keep the body working properly. Some vitamins help you resist infections and keep your nerves healthy, while others may help your body get energy from food or help your blood clot properly. By following the Dietary Guidelines, you will get enough of most of these vitamins from food. It is usually better to get the nutrients you need from food, rather than a pill. That's because nutrient-dense foods contain other things that are good for you, like fiber.

Trace elements are also essential nutrients that your body needs to work properly, but in much smaller amounts than vitamins and minerals. They include iodine and fluorine. Trace elements are found in small amounts in a variety of foods such as meat, fish, cereals, milk and dairy foods, vegetables and nuts.

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