

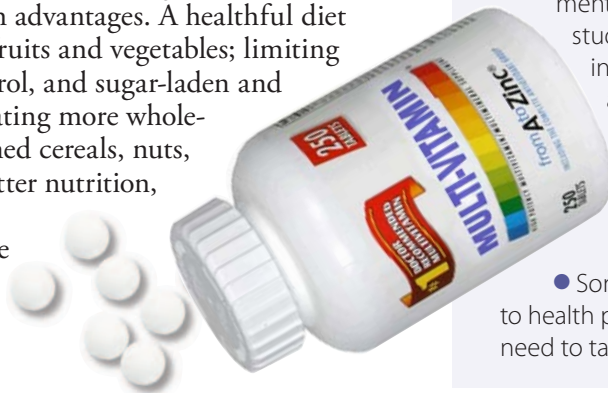
## Do Multivitamins Make You Healthier?

About half of all Americans take a multivitamin supplement just to make sure they are getting all the nutrients they need. And they're spending in excess of \$20 billion yearly to do it. Yet the Women's Health Initiative, which studied more than 160,000 women for 8 years, found no link between taking multivitamins and decreased risk of cancer, heart disease, or stroke. In some cases, multivitamins increased risk. For example, some women who took multivitamins with high levels of vitamin A (*retinol*, not *beta-carotene*) showed a significant increased risk for osteoporosis.

Numerous studies show that eating healthfully has significant health advantages. A healthful diet means eating more fruits and vegetables; limiting animal fats, cholesterol, and sugar-laden and refined foods; and eating more whole-grain breads, unrefined cereals, nuts, and legumes. For better nutrition, put your money into these proven effective dietary methods.

*Archives of Internal Medicine. Feb. 2009.*

**Retinol** is found in animal sources (e.g., liver, kidney, eggs, and dairy products).  
**Beta-carotene** is found in plants (e.g., yellow, orange, red, & dark green vegetables and carrots).



### Some People Need Extra Vitamins

Most people can get all the vitamins and minerals they need from eating a healthful diet. But people with certain conditions can be helped by taking a supplement. Here are some examples:

- Fewer babies are born with birth defects when their mothers take folic acid before and during the pregnancy.
- People living in the northern half of the United States do not get adequate vitamin D in the winter and have lower risks for several health problems if they take vitamin D supplements, at least 1,000 IU daily, in the winter months.
- As people get older, they don't absorb vitamin B-12 as well as they once did. Some studies on seniors show that as many as 30% of the population has low vitamin B-12 levels and should be taking a vitamin B-12 supplement.
- Total vegetarians would also benefit from taking a B-12 supplement. Studies show that they are often low in B-12. One study showed that vegans had the lowest levels of B-12 in the group and many showed some signs of brain atrophy.
- People who don't consume dairy foods need to be sure to get adequate calcium – either from other calcium-rich foods, such as beans, tofu, and greens, or from a mineral supplement with calcium.
- Some people have difficulty absorbing nutrients due to health problems, such as celiac disease. These people may need to take extra vitamins.

## Why You Should Be Concerned About Childhood Diseases

Thanks to immunizations, diseases such as measles and whooping cough (*pertussis*) have been virtually eliminated in the United States. However, recent outbreaks of these diseases highlight the importance of continued immunization.



You might not think you need to be concerned about these diseases – but you should be.

Some adults assume that the vaccines they received as children will protect them for the rest of their lives. Generally this is true, except that:

- Some adults were never vaccinated as children.
- Newer vaccines were not available when some adults were children.
- Immunity after having the disease or receiving a vaccination can begin to fade over time.

As people age, they become more susceptible to serious disease caused by common infections (e.g., flu and pneumonia).

Talk with your doctor about updating your immunizations for tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis, influenza, pneumonia, hepatitis, varicella (chickenpox/shingles), measles, mumps, rubella, and meningitis.

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2010.*

To help you understand which vaccines you might need, complete the Adolescent and Adult Vaccine Quiz online: [www2a.cdc.gov/nip/adultImmSched](http://www2a.cdc.gov/nip/adultImmSched)

## Everyone Benefits from Physical Activity

Research has shown that you'll be much healthier if you exercise regularly. In fact, it's one of the most important things you can do. Regular physical activity can help:

- Control your weight.
- Reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease.
- Reduce your risk for type 2 diabetes and metabolic syndrome.
- Reduce your risk of some cancers (especially breast and bowel).
- Strengthen your bones and muscles.
- Improve your mental health and mood.
- Improve your ability to do daily activities and prevent falls if you're an older adult.
- Increase your chances of living longer.

How much exercise will give you these benefits? Any exercise is good – more exercise brings greater health rewards. Here are the latest government recommendations for adults. You don't have to get all of your exercise at one time. It might be easier for you to break it up



into two 15-minute active sessions a day, or even three 10-minute sessions. If you walk 15 minutes to catch a bus in the morning and again in the evening, you would get 30 minutes. Or you can walk 10 minutes before breakfast and again at noon each day, then mow your lawn for another 10+ minutes in the evening. If you want more benefit, go a little longer or mix in some vigorous-intensity activities. No matter what your age or how inactive you have been, you can decide to be physically active. If you're not sure about becoming active or boosting your level of physical activity because you're afraid of getting hurt, the good news is that moderate-intensity aerobic activity, like brisk walking, is generally safe for most people.

Read ideas to help you be more physically active: [www.wellsource.info/wn/Aerobic-Fitness-Guidelines.pdf](http://www.wellsource.info/wn/Aerobic-Fitness-Guidelines.pdf)

Learn more about physical activity from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/guidelines/adults.html](http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/guidelines/adults.html)

Get active today! Pick an activity you like and set goals you can achieve. The point is not to make physical activity an unwelcome chore, but something you enjoy. Take advantage of every opportunity you have to be active. If you have health problems or concerns, ask your doctor for specific guidance.

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2010.*



## Improve Your Life in Five Minutes or Less!

Being healthy and safe takes commitment, but it doesn't have to be time-consuming. Most things are so simple and take so little time that you'll wonder why you've been avoiding them. Below are some steps you can take to help protect your health and safety – in five minutes or less.

It takes one minute or less to:

- ✓ Buckle up.
- ✓ Drink a glassful of water.
- ✓ Gear up with helmets, wrist guards, and other appropriate safety equipment.
- ✓ Protect your hearing with ear plugs or ear muffs when you can't lower noise to a safe level.

Read tips to prevent poisonings: [www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/poisonprevention.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/poisonprevention.htm)

- ✓ Wash your hands to lower the risk of spreading germs.
- ✓ Protect your skin from sunburn. (Wear sunscreen, cover up, and seek shade.)
- ✓ Read food labels to see how much saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, sugars, and protein are in the product. You can also check the serving size to be sure you don't eat more calories than you want to.
- ✓ Wear a life jacket when on a boat – even if you can swim!

In about five minutes you can:

- ✓ Check your blood pressure.
- ✓ Grab a healthy snack – a handful of nuts, fresh fruit, yogurt.
- ✓ Prevent poisonings by installing safety locks on cabinets where medicines and cleaning products are stored.

- ✓ Make an appointment for a routine exam or vaccination.
- ✓ Test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors to make sure they work properly.

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2010.*

### ASK THE WELLNESS DOCTOR

**Q:** What foods are high in iron?

**A:** Go to <http://www.wellsource.info/wn/ask-iron.pdf> to read the answer from Don Hall, DrPH, CHES.

To ask your question, email: [paulaw@wellsource.com](mailto:paulaw@wellsource.com), subject line: Ask the Wellness Doctor. Emails with any other subject line will be directed to the spam folder.