



6 MUST-HAVE NUTRIENTS FOR WOMEN

Even if you eat well, you may be missing these essentials for good health. Here's how to get your daily fill of the nutrients you need.

By Marygrace Taylor

Good for you for reaching for the vitamin C-rich citrus and calcium-fortified cereals. You may even pop a fish oil supplement every day. But if you're like the average woman, especially those 50-plus, you still may be missing some crucial nutrients in your everyday diet: vitamins and minerals that offer protection from cancer, Alzheimer's and diabetes, to name a few. And while a multivitamin is a good idea, it might not contain high enough amounts of these six nutrients. Here's what you need to round out your diet—and how to get more of each one.

Potassium

Why it matters Only 1 percent of women consume enough potassium, a mineral that helps cut your risk for heart disease and stroke by lowering blood pressure. In fact, one analysis of nearly 250,000 adults found that increasing potassium intake by just 1,600mg per day slashed stroke risk by 21 percent. The good news? "Most fresh fruits and vegetables have 300mg to 400mg potassium per serving," says Frances Largeman-Roth, RD, author of *Eating in Color* (Stewart, Tabori and Chang).

How much you need 4,700mg daily

Best food sources Swiss chard, lima beans, sweet potatoes, bananas and cantaloupe



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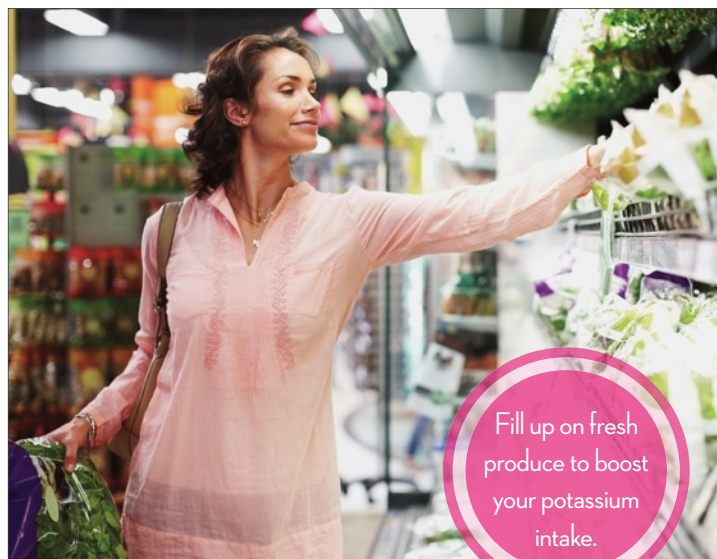
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Fill up on fresh produce to boost your potassium intake.

Vitamin E

Why it matters Consider it brain food. New research suggests that vitamin E may protect against what are called white matter lesions—small clumps of dead cells—that are linked to heightened Alzheimer's risk. The vitamin is mostly found in foods high in fat, though, which means you could be missing out if you've reduced your intake of even healthy fats. To make room for more E-rich foods, focus on cutting out sources of empty calories in your diet instead, such as added sugars often found in packaged foods, Largeman-Roth says.



How much you need 15mg daily

Best food sources Sunflower seeds, almond butter and hazelnuts

Choline

Why it matters An essential micronutrient, choline supports the liver's natural detoxification process (no juice cleanse necessary!). Some research also suggests that getting enough choline could reduce your risk for breast cancer. But unfortunately, most women over age 50 take in only half their daily quota.

How much you need 425mg daily

Best food sources Eggs (particularly the yolks), salmon and Brussels sprouts



Vitamin B12

Why it matters B12 keeps your central nervous system in working order, which is why too little can lead to numbness, weakness and anemia. But adults over 50, as well as those with digestive disorders such as celiac disease, tend to have trouble absorbing the vitamin, Largeman-Roth says.

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Because it's found mostly in animal-based foods, vegetarians and vegans also could fall short.



How much you need 2.4mcg daily

Best food sources Yogurt, shrimp and chicken or, for vegan options, fortified breakfast cereals and nondairy milks

Magnesium

Why it matters "More than 300 of the body's biochemical reactions require magnesium," says Tina Ruggiero, RD, author of *The Truly Healthy Family Cookbook* (Page Street Publishing). For instance, magnesium helps reduce your chances of hip fracture, keeps your immune system in fighting form and plays a role in staving off diseases such as diabetes and metabolic syndrome. Still, research suggests that nearly half of all adults may be deficient—particularly those who eat a gluten-free diet, as whole grains are a significant magnesium source.

How much you need 320mg daily

Best food sources Spinach, cashews, avocado, brown rice and black beans



Vitamin D

Why it matters Vitamin D works with calcium to keep your bones strong and reduce your chances of developing osteoporosis. There's some evidence that it may help prevent depression and cognitive decline, particularly in older adults. But because it's only found in a few foods, most of us don't get nearly as much as we should, says Ruggiero.



How much you need 600IU daily

Best food sources Salmon, eggs, fortified milk (dairy and nondairy), fortified yogurt and fortified orange juice



DO YOU NEED

MORE PROTEIN?

As we age, our bodies are less efficient at processing protein's amino acids, so we may need more protein to promote healthy muscles, Frances Largeman-Roth, RD, says. A 150-pound woman should get around 68g per day from a mix of lean animal sources, such as chicken or turkey (four ounces has 35g), and plant sources, such as beans (most varieties are 15g per cup).



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In many places, getting enough nutrients means the difference between thriving and merely surviving.

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