



Dietary Supplements for Children

The best way to assure your children get plenty of vitamins and minerals is to teach them the importance of eating a variety of healthy foods. Offer them foods from the different food groups each day including fresh fruits, vegetables, lean meats, fish, whole grains, nuts, legumes, milk, and cheese.

Children don't usually eat the way we would like them to eat, and picky eaters might not get the vitamins, minerals and other important nutrients they need. Some kids don't always eat healthy and some rarely eat anything healthy at all. Processed foods and junk foods don't contain much nutritional value, just unhealthy fats, sugar and calories.

A healthy diet is as important for children as it is for adults. When a child doesn't eat enough nutritious foods, his or her ability to learn may suffer. Kids who don't get all the nutrition they need from their diets can take supplements as a way to ensure that they get enough vitamins and minerals. Taking dietary supplements isn't a cure-all for an unhealthy diet, so be sure to continue offering healthy food choices to your kids. Even picky eaters will eat some healthy foods.

Which Dietary Supplements Should Kids Take?

Make sure you purchase high quality children's dietary supplements for children from a nutrition store or a health food store. Children's dietary supplements can be in the form of capsules, tablets, liquids, or chewable vitamins. Some of the all natural brands are *Nordic Naturals*, *Gummy Vites*, *Yummi Bears* and *Animal Parade*.

1. **Multivitamin/mineral.** Vitamins and minerals are necessary for proper growth, metabolism, digestion, immune system function, muscle and nerve function and detoxification processes in the liver. Scientific studies have shown that the majority of us are deficient in many essential nutrients because of poor dietary habits and other factors which may deplete nutrient levels such as caffeine, drugs, stress or pollution. A daily multivitamin can help to keep your child's energy and concentration levels at their best.
2. **Acidophilus** is the friendly bacteria that lives in our digestive tract, it is important for healthy digestion and immunity. Healthy bacterial balance in our digestive tract is easily affected by poor dietary habits and by the use of medications, such as corticosteroids and antibiotics. Acidophilus has also been found useful in the treatment and prevention of skin conditions and allergies. Children in daycare who take acidophilus supplements are found to have less frequent colds, flu and ear infections.
3. **Vitamin C (with bioflavonoids)** Kids who snub fruits and vegetables may not be getting enough vitamin C, which is important for our immune system. It is a potent antioxidant and a natural antihistamine and it also helps speed wound healing. It is essential in preventing infection as well as in shortening the duration of an illness. Vitamin C is best taken with bioflavonoids in divided dosages spaced throughout the day. Vitamin C is a water-soluble vitamin that is safe even at high doses.

4. **EPA/ High DHA fish oils.** Omega-3 essential fatty acids (EFA's) are necessary in the formation of every cell in the body. Eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), the components of essential fatty acids, are natural anti-inflammatory agents. The EFA's that contain higher amounts of DHA have been found to protect and maintain proper nervous system and brain function, which is important during those long school days. It can be found in pumpkin seeds, cold oily ocean fish like tuna, canola oil and flax oil. Symptoms of depression, ADD/ADHD, schizophrenia and memory loss may improve with EFA supplements. Fish oils are also very useful in the treatment and prevention of skin conditions such as dry winter itch, eczema and psoriasis.
5. **Zinc citrate** Research has found that children and young adults with ADHD/ADD are deficient in zinc. Zinc is found in the brain and has been linked to memory and thinking skills. It has a significant effect on visual memory, learning, emotional and behavioral state and overall cognitive function. A deficiency may result in learning impairments, poor memory and emotional and behavioral problems.

In one study, males with a history of aggressive behavior were found to have high levels of copper and low levels of zinc compared with non-aggressive people. Zinc and copper compete for absorption. Therefore, zinc supplements can be effective in lowering copper levels. Proper mineral balance is essential for the production of chemical signals in the brain that influence behavior. Both copper and zinc tend to be concentrated in a part of the brain known to be associated with stress response.

It usually takes two to three months to overcome a copper-zinc imbalance, treatment with zinc supplements should be continued for a minimum of four months before deciding its effectiveness. Zinc deficiency can result from exposure to heavy metal toxins, such as cadmium and lead, which prevent its absorption. Excessive consumption of sugar or carbohydrates are also known to reduce zinc absorption.

6. **Magnesium** Magnesium is a trace mineral that the body needs to function properly. A deficiency of this mineral has been linked to ADHD in children. Magnesium supplements can promote relaxation, focus, attention and restful sleep.
7. **Echinacea** For sneezing, colds, the flu or general immunity improvement, an herbal product that contains echinacea is a great way to shorten the duration of an illness as well as prevent the development of new ones. It is always best to increase immune system function rather than treat an infection once it has already appeared.
8. **The B complex vitamins** have several functions, some of which are involved with carbohydrate metabolism. A child who has a high refined sugar and starch diet may deplete those important B vitamins.

Sources

Top 10 Supplements for Healthy Kids By Dr. Natasha Turner, ND; www.truestarhealth.com

Do children need dietary supplements? By Shereen Jeqtviq; www.nutrition.about.com