DO YOU NEED A SUPPLEMENT?

There are many vitamin and mineral supplements on store shelves. Some people in the United States need to take supplements because they are not getting enough vitamins and minerals in the foods they eat. It can be hard to know if you need to take a supplement. The groups of people who may need to take supplements include: pregnant and breast feeding women, people who do not eat any foods from one of the food groups, older adults and strict vegetarians. Most other healthy people do not need supplements.

It can be dangerous to take too much of any vitamin or mineral. Unless you have a medical condition that makes you need more of a nutrient and are under a doctor’s care, do not take more than 100% of the Recommended Daily Allowance.

Food is the best source for any nutrient. No one food contains every nutrient so eating a variety of foods is important. There is not a vitamin-mineral supplement that has all the nutrients found in food. Supplements are not a fountain-of-youth or a cure-all. Improved eating and exercise habits will do more for your health than any supplement can!
GET MOVING . . .

It is never too late to start exercising. Physical fitness helps your entire body stay strong and healthy. Here are some suggestions for getting your exercise routine started.

- Exercise with friends or family. Go in pairs or groups. They will help to keep you on track.
- Exercise at the same time every day. This way it will become a habit.
- Set aside at least 30-45 minutes to get the most benefit of your exercise program.
- Drink plenty of water before and after exercising to avoid dehydration.
- Start off slowly and gradually increase the time and energy put into the exercise.
- Enjoy yourself!

DID YOU KNOW . . . ?

- Supplements have not been proven to help people manage stress, increase energy, or build lean body tissue.
- Some supplements may change the way prescriptions and over-the-counter medications work.
- Essential vitamins and minerals are only available through the food we eat. The body does not make them.
- Supplements are not magical and not for everyone.

HOW TO CHOOSE A SUPPLEMENT

1) Always read the label. Make sure the nutrient label contains vitamins and minerals in amounts less than or close to 100% of the Daily Values.
2) Do not buy or use a supplement past its expiration date.
3) Store brands are often the same as the national brand, only cheaper.
4) Check with your doctor or pharmacist to make sure it is safe to take a supplement with your current medications.

The best way to get all the nutrients you need is to eat a variety of foods!
FAMILY ACTIVITY

Sweet potatoes are a perfect food to add vitamin A to your family’s diet. Get the family together to grow your own. Start small – with one sweet potato.

Place the sweet potato in a jar of water. Keep the top 1/3 of the potato above the water by placing toothpicks into the sides of the potato. The pointed end of the sweet potato should be down in the water. In a few weeks a vine with several stems will begin to sprout. The stems are weak, so you may want to tie them to a stake. Sweet potatoes like a bright, sunny location. If the sweet potato vine gets too long, cut it back a few inches and it will get bushier. Have the family plant the sweet potato vine outside in late May. By fall the family will be digging fresh potatoes.

CLIP AND COOK

Sweet Potato Custard

1 cup mashed, cooked or canned sweet potato* 1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup mashed banana (about 2 small) 1/4 cup raisins
1 cup fat free evaporated skim milk 1 Tbsp sugar
2 Tbsp packed brown sugar 1 tsp cinnamon
2 beaten egg yolks (or 1/3 cup of egg substitute) Nonstick spray

1. In a medium bowl, stir together sweet potato and banana.
2. Add milk, blending well.
3. Add brown sugar, egg yolks and salt, mixing thoroughly.
4. Sprinkle a casserole dish with nonstick spray. Transfer sweet potato mixture to dish.
5. Combine raisins, sugar and cinnamon; sprinkle over top of sweet potato mixture.
6. Bake at 300°F for 45 to 50 minutes or until a knife inserted near center comes out clean.

Makes 6 servings.

*Boil or microwave raw potatoes until soft.

Sources: National Institutes of Health - Down Home Healthy Cookin’
University of Illinois Extension - The Great Plant Escape