


 ALTERNATIVE
MEDICINE CHEST

Essential Nutrients for Men

Most American men don't get enough nutrients from the foods they eat. Luckily, supplements can help fill that gap. In one study, men who took a multivitamin were 43 percent less likely to have a heart attack or stroke after 20 years than those who didn't. That's just one example of why men need to pay attention to the essential nutrients they may be missing.

B Vitamins

The B vitamins are a family of eight water-soluble nutrients that support a variety of cellular functions in a man's body. The Bs are also important for energy production, skin healing, and cognitive function. In one study, dietary data and information about supplement use were collected for 100 adults with mild cognitive impairment (MCI), 100 with Alzheimer's disease (AD), and 121 without cognitive impairments. Participants then took part in a variety of cognitive and memory tests. Those with the highest intake of B vitamins had the best scores. However, those with the lowest levels—especially for vitamins B2, B6, and B12—also showed signs of poor cognition. And this link to low B levels was especially strong among those with Alzheimer's disease.

These critical B vitamins have also been shown to help combat stress and lower the risk of neuropathy and liver damage. And yet, even though they are so vital to both brain and body, these nutrients aren't stored in the body. Making matters worse, the B vitamins are also depleted by stress, a poor diet, and alcohol. This is why it's so important to replenish them with a comprehensive B complex that includes vitamins B6 and B12, along with folate in their active forms—pyridoxal-5-phosphate (P-5-P), methylcobalamin, and methylfolate, respectively—to ensure proper utilization by the male body.

Fiber and Probiotics

The typical Standard American Diet (SAD) lives up to its acronym by falling far short of the nutrients men need for good health. That's especially true for fiber and probiotics. First up, fiber. The goal is to consume at least 30 to 38 grams of dietary fiber daily. A quick internet search can clue you in to some of the many high-fiber foods in your local grocery store including a wide variety of fruits, veggies, nuts, and seeds. Pay attention to your fiber intake for a few days to see if you are reaching the goal.

What about probiotics? Living a modern life can upset the bacterial balance in your gut. And that means reinforcements are needed in the form of friendly, beneficial probiotics. The two most prevalent types of probiotic bacteria in the gut are *Lactobacillus*, which lives in the small intestine, and *Bifidobacterium*, which is found in the large intestine. Studies show that one type of *Lactobacillus* bacteria known as *Lactobacillus rhamnosus* fortifies the intestinal barrier and reduces IBS symptoms as much as 42 percent. Another—*Lactobacillus plantarum*—can help decrease abdominal pain and bloating. *Bifidobacterium bifidum*, on the other hand, helps reduce allergies, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels. Look for a probiotic supplement that delivers these strains and provides at least 20 billion live, active colony forming units, or CFUs, to support a healthy microbiome.



Multivitamin- Multimineral Supplement

When it comes to taking a multivitamin, remember these words: absorption and use. Vitamins and minerals come in different forms, with some easier to absorb than others, and it's vital that your multi supplies the most bioavailable forms. But that's not the only thing you need to consider. Adopting the following "rules" can ensure you're getting the most bang for your buck. Rule one: choose a multi that supplies more than a single dose of daily nutrients since your body needs a steady stream throughout the day. Rule two: be aware that the standard Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA) isn't optimal—it's actually just the bare minimum you need to avoid severe deficiency. Rule three: even with a great diet, you can no longer count on foods to deliver essential minerals. Thanks to modern farming techniques, today's soil has been seriously depleted of nutrients—and that means the food grown in this soil is also low in nutrients.

Taking a daily multi can help you get the essential vitamins and minerals needed to avoid long-term deficiencies and the resulting health consequences. You can further boost nutrient absorption by looking for a supplement that contains chelated minerals (listed on labels as TRAACS). When choosing a multi, check to see if it includes a full range of bioavailable, active forms of the B vitamins, including vitamin B6 as P5P and vitamin B12 as methylcobalamin. Other vital nutrients include vitamins A, C, D3, E, K2, and choline, plus the minerals iodine, magnesium, potassium, selenium, and zinc. Bottom line? Don't settle for a product with nutrients that aren't absorbed well—and always take your multi with food to prevent stomach upset.

Omega-3s

Omega-3s are known to be true multitaskers for men. In fact, studies show that these essential fats support cardiovascular health—including healthy blood pressure and cholesterol levels—as well as joint health, brain function, and a healthy nervous system. But two types of omega-3s are hard to get from diet alone—EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) and DHA (docosahexaenoic acid). Although fish and krill oil are often recommended as a way to get these omega-3s, they aren't the best answer. To get the most from an omega-3 supplement, look for bioidentical essential fatty acids that are bound to phospholipids for enhanced absorption. Also, check the label for the word "peptides," which are strings of amino acids vital for mood, immune, and overall health support that you won't find in fish or krill oil supplements.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D is important for many reasons. Although the body naturally produces vitamin D when your skin is exposed to the sun, age lessens that ability by as much as 60 percent. This fact lines up with research showing that 44 percent of older men have severe deficiencies, increasing the risk of more aggressive types of prostate cancer and heightening the risk of recurrence. However, several clinical trials have found that men who take vitamin D3 supplements over the long term have reduced PSA levels (a marker of potential prostate problems), less risk of developing prostate cancer, and increased survival rates. A recent Australian study found that people with a vitamin D deficiency were also more likely to suffer from heart disease and higher blood pressure. What's more, because D is key for supporting the growth of new brain cells, it may help reduce the accumulation of abnormal proteins associated with dementia. Just make sure you're supplementing with the correct form of vitamin D, listed on labels as D3. That form, as opposed to vitamin D2, is the active form of the vitamin that is naturally synthesized. ■

