



6 Crucial Nutrients You Aren't Getting Enough Of

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No matter how well we eat, there are a number of nutrients our bodies need but can be tricky to get, or easy to skip. In addition, busy schedules can often mean less focus gets put on maintaining a truly balanced diet. This can lead to deficiencies in certain areas. We asked **certified nutritionist and personal trainer Franci Cohen** to let us in on some of the nutrients we most often miss, and where to find them.

Magnesium

Many people are lacking when it comes to magnesium due to the increase in consumption of processed foods, but it's important not to overlook this nutrient. "Magnesium is needed to produce energy in your cells, maintain the integrity and function of muscles and nerves, maintain a healthy heart rhythm, keep your immune system healthy, and it is also essential for bone-building and growth," explains Cohen. Magnesium also regulates blood pressure and blood sugar.

Where to get it: Spinach, raw almonds, and whole wheat bread are high in magnesium, and can easily be incorporated into your daily diet.

Vitamin C

While you might think that vitamin C is abundant enough that it's almost impossible to fall short, Cohen says we can still miss the mark with this vitamin. "Although it is readily available in many foods, people sometimes fall short because their busy lifestyles steer them towards processed foods as opposed to fresh healthy ones," she explains. Vitamin C is needed to form connective tissues in the body, strengthen blood vessels and gums, and boost immunity.

Where to get it: Fresh fruits, particularly citrus and tropical fruits, and green leafy veggies and peppers are very high in vitamin C.

Folate

Folate is a water-soluble B vitamin (meaning it doesn't get stored in the body) involved in the formation of red blood cells. Folate also helps to prevent birth defects such as those involving the spine or brain, Cohen says. "Although many foods are now fortified with folate, certain medical conditions such as pregnancy, kidney/renal disease, and liver disease, and overuse of certain medications such as those that treat diabetes or epilepsy, may increase the need for folate," she explains.

Where to get it: Dark leafy greens provide the highest amounts of folate, say Cohen. Other foods rich in folate include navy beans, oranges, and fortified grains.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D can be harder than you think to get. "People can fall short because vitamin D is manufactured under the skin when we are exposed to sunlight," notes Cohen. "Because many of us steer clear of the sun's harmful rays for fear of skin cancer, many of us do not get the sun exposure we need for our bodies to manufacture ample amounts of vitamin D." We need vitamin D to keep calcium

and phosphorus in the blood, which helps form and maintain strong bones. Cohen adds that vitamin D also fosters a healthy immune system and promotes healthy cell growth and development.

Where to get it: One cup of skim milk provides about 200 IU of vitamin D, and eggs, salmon, and organ meats are also good sources.

Iron

Not all of us get enough iron, a deficiency of which can lead to extreme fatigue and anemia. “Iron is needed to help the blood carry oxygen throughout the body,” says Cohen. She adds that iron deficiency develops from either poor iron intake through the diet, inadequate absorption by the body, or through blood loss.

Where to get it: Meat or fish are good sources, as is blackstrap molasses, says Cohen. To further enhance the body’s absorption of iron, she suggests eating iron-rich food with a glass of orange juice since vitamin C helps increase the absorption of iron by the body.

Calcium

Calcium, which helps build and maintain strong bones and teeth, is another nutrient we often assume we’re getting enough of, but may not be. This can happen for a few reasons. “Many weight-conscious women steer clear of dairy products because they associate cheeses and milk with fat and weight gain,” says Cohen. “Additionally, even those women who include dairy products in their diet may not absorb much of it,” she explains. The amount of calcium our bodies can absorb can be affected by age, pregnancy, and diet.

Where to get it: Although some plant-based foods, such as spinach and collard greens, contain significant amounts of calcium, Cohen recommends dairy products as the best source.