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## Vitamins and Minerals

By Carol Ann Brannon, MS, RD, LD

A general multivitamin/mineral supplement is recommended for individuals that avoid whole food groups or a significant number of foods from a particular food group. Children and adults with food allergies or intolerances, as well as those adhering to special diets like the GFCF diet, should consider taking a multivitamin/mineral supplement.

First, it is important for people, especially parents, to understand exactly what vitamins and minerals are and what their roles and functions are in the body. The saying, "If a little is good, then more must be better," does NOT apply to vitamins and minerals because at high levels they can be toxic.

**Vitamins:** are chemical compounds that contain carbon, which is an element needed for growth, health, metabolism, and physical well-being. They are found in plant and animal foods. Vitamins function in the body as part of enzymes, the molecules (catalysts) that help complete chemical reactions. Some vitamins are part of hormones, substances that promote and protect overall health and reproduction. There are 2 classes of vitamins: fat-soluble and water-soluble.

**Minerals:** are inorganic compounds, which mean they do not contain carbon. Like vitamins, they are part of enzymes. They are involved in chemical reactions in the body necessary for growth, development, and overall health.

In general, most children could benefit from taking a general, full-spectrum multivitamin/mineral supplement today. It has been estimated from surveys that only 1 percent of children meet their daily requirements for vitamins and minerals. We live in a fast-paced and fast food world where getting in adequate intakes of plant foods (fruits, vegetables, and whole grains) is difficult to say the least. A full-spectrum multivitamin/mineral supplement is one that contains around 100 percent of the RDA of water-soluble vitamins, fat-soluble vitamins (vitamin A, D, and E), and selected minerals.

## **Full-Spectrum Vitamin and Mineral Supplement contains:**

**Water-soluble vitamins:** B-complex (B1, B2, B3, B5, B6, B12, folic acid, biotin) and Vitamin C **Fat-soluble vitamins:** (A, D, E, K) **Minerals:** Calcium, magnesium, iron, zinc, selenium, manganese, chromium, molybdenum

## **Individuals at risk for nutritional deficiency may have one or more of the following:**

- Self-limited diet
- Sensory (taste, smell, texture) issues that interferes with food intake and limits variety
- Physical and/or sensory problems related to chewing and swallowing
- Behavior problems that may interfere with mealtimes
- Food allergies or sensitivities
- GI concerns: irregularity, diarrhea, yeast overgrowth, enzyme deficiencies

**In summary,** first evaluate your or your child's diet and assess which food groups are adequate and which ones are lacking. Look for a multi-vitamin mineral supplement that best addresses your child's unique nutrient needs; do not give children adult vitamins/minerals. A Registered Dietitian can help you determine the optimal vitamin/mineral supplement for each individual child.