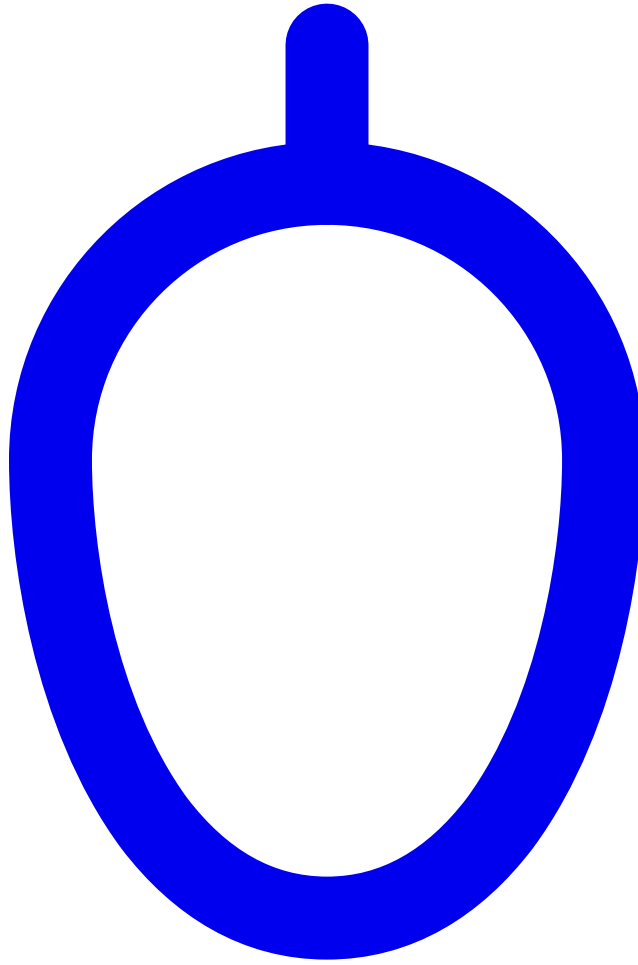




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Macros

Understanding Micronutrients: Vitamins and Minerals in Everyday Eating

By the [Gazpro Nutrition Editorial Team](#) · Reviewed against our [editorial standards](#) · 8 min read ·
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Disclaimer: This article is for general information only and is not medical or dietary advice. Consult a doctor or registered dietitian before making significant dietary changes.

Understanding Micronutrients: Vitamins and Minerals in Everyday Eating

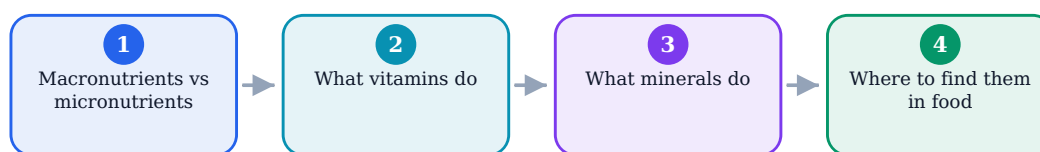


Figure: Understanding Micronutrients: Vitamins and Minerals in Everyday Eating

Protein, carbohydrates and fat — the macronutrients — get most of the attention because we need them in large amounts. But the vitamins and minerals we need in far smaller quantities, the micronutrients, are just as essential. They don't provide energy, yet almost every process in the body depends on them.

This guide gives a friendly overview of micronutrients: what they are, what some of the key ones do, and where to find them in everyday food. This is general education, not medical advice.

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Macronutrients vs micronutrients

Nutrients split into two broad groups. **Macronutrients** — protein, carbohydrates and fat — we need in large amounts and they provide energy. **Micronutrients** — vitamins and minerals — we need in tiny amounts and they provide no energy, yet they enable the reactions that keep us alive and well. Both matter; they simply play different roles.

What vitamins do

Vitamins are organic compounds that support a huge range of functions. Some, like the B vitamins, help the body release energy from food; vitamin C supports the immune system and skin; vitamin A supports vision and immunity; vitamin D supports bone health and more. Vitamins are grouped as fat-soluble (A, D, E, K) or water-soluble (B

vitamins and C), which affects how the body stores and uses them.

What minerals do

Minerals are inorganic elements the body needs for structure and function. **Calcium** supports bones and teeth; **iron** is central to carrying oxygen in the blood; **potassium** and **sodium** help balance fluids and support nerve and muscle function; **zinc** supports immunity and healing. Even trace minerals, needed in minuscule amounts, are essential.

Where to find them in food

Different food groups tend to supply different micronutrients, which is why variety matters. **Vegetables and fruit** provide many vitamins and minerals and beneficial plant compounds; **whole grains** supply B vitamins and minerals; **meat, fish, eggs, beans and dairy** provide iron, zinc, calcium and B vitamins depending on the source. No single food covers everything, which is the whole point of eating broadly.

The 'eat the rainbow' idea

A simple, practical strategy is to eat a **variety of colours**. Different pigments in fruits and vegetables often correspond to different nutrients and beneficial compounds, so a colourful plate naturally tends to cover a wider range. It's an easy heuristic that doesn't require tracking individual vitamins and minerals.

Do you need supplements?

For most people eating a varied diet, food supplies a good range of micronutrients.

Supplements can be helpful in specific situations — certain life stages, dietary patterns, or medically identified needs — but they aren't a substitute for a varied diet, and more isn't always better. If you're considering supplements or think you may have a deficiency, speak to a qualified healthcare professional rather than self-diagnosing.

Key micronutrients and where to find them

You don't need to memorise every vitamin and mineral, but knowing a handful of the most commonly discussed ones — and their food sources — makes a varied diet easier to build:

Micronutrient	Commonly associated with	Everyday food sources
Vitamin C	Immune function, iron absorption	Citrus, peppers, broccoli
Vitamin D	Bone health	Oily fish, fortified foods, sunlight
Iron	Carrying oxygen in the blood	Red meat, beans, lentils, leafy greens
Calcium	Bones and teeth	Dairy, fortified plant milks, leafy greens
Potassium	Fluid balance	Bananas, potatoes, beans

The pattern is clear: a diet spanning many food groups and colours naturally covers

most micronutrient needs.

Why variety beats obsession

Chasing individual nutrients can backfire into anxious, restrictive eating. A more sustainable mindset is to focus on overall variety: different vegetables, fruits, wholegrains, proteins and dairy or alternatives across the week. This spreads your intake across many nutrients without the need to track each one, and it's far easier to maintain than a spreadsheet of targets.

Do most people need supplements?

For many people eating a varied diet, supplements are unnecessary, though certain groups or situations may benefit — for example where sunlight is limited or a specific need has been identified. More isn't automatically better, and some nutrients can be harmful in excess. If you suspect a deficiency or are considering supplements, the sensible step is to consult a doctor or registered dietitian rather than self-prescribing. This is general information, not medical or dietary advice.

How cooking and storage affect micronutrients

It's not only which foods you eat but how you handle them that influences the micronutrients you actually get. Some vitamins, particularly water-soluble ones like vitamin C and several B vitamins, are sensitive to heat, light and water, which means prolonged boiling can leach a portion of them into the cooking water. Gentler methods such as steaming, microwaving with little water, or quick stir-frying tend to preserve more, and using any leftover cooking liquid in soups or sauces recaptures some of what would otherwise be discarded. Freshness and storage matter too: produce gradually loses some nutrient content over time and with exposure to air and light, which is part of why frozen fruit and vegetables — frozen soon after harvest — can sometimes rival or exceed fresh items that have travelled and sat for days. None of this means you should worry about every meal; cooking makes many foods safer, more digestible and more appealing, which encourages you to eat them in the first place. The practical message is simply to favour gentler cooking where easy, store produce sensibly, and lean on frozen options without guilt, all of which help you keep more of the nutrients your varied diet provides.

Printable checklist

Print this page or save the PDF to keep these steps handy.

- ☐ Macronutrients vs micronutrients
- ☐ What vitamins do
- ☐ What minerals do
- ☐ Where to find them in food
- ☐ The 'eat the rainbow' idea
- ☐ Do you need supplements?

☐ Key micronutrients and where to find them

☐ Why variety beats obsession

Summary

Micronutrients are the vitamins and minerals the body needs in small amounts to function. Unlike macronutrients, they don't supply energy, but they support countless processes from immunity to bone health. A varied diet rich in vegetables, fruit, whole grains, proteins and dairy or alternatives generally provides a good range. Eating a variety of colours and food groups is the simplest strategy. This is general information, not personalised or medical advice.

Key Takeaways

- Micronutrients are vitamins and minerals needed in small amounts.
- They don't provide energy but support nearly all body processes.
- A varied, colourful diet is the simplest way to cover a broad range.
- Different food groups supply different micronutrients.
- Supplements can help in specific cases but aren't a substitute for a varied diet.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I get all my micronutrients from food?

Many people eating a varied diet can cover a broad range of micronutrients from food alone. Certain circumstances or dietary patterns may create specific needs, which is best assessed by a qualified professional.

Are more vitamins always better?

No. The body needs micronutrients in specific amounts, and very high intakes of some can be harmful. A varied diet is the safest way to meet needs; supplement carefully and ideally with professional guidance.

What's the easiest way to eat more micronutrients?

Eat a variety of foods and a variety of colours — more vegetables and fruit, whole grains, and a range of protein sources. Variety naturally broadens the nutrients you take in without any tracking.

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