

The Supporters

Not everything you eat plays a leading role in nourishing your body. Still, you'd be in big trouble without the support of two nutrients — vitamins and minerals — and some fiber.

Many enzymes can't do their work without the help of small amounts of vitamins and minerals. For instance, the vitamin niacin, in meat, fish and cereals, helps make enzymes that maintain healthy body tissues. The mineral manganese, in vegetables, nuts and grains, triggers many different enzymes, including those that help you grow.

Besides these roles, there's a host of other duties that vitamins and minerals perform. Vitamin C, found in oranges, tomatoes and leafy vegetables, helps heal sores and wounds, while vitamin B1 (also called thiamine), in grains, peas and beans, works to release energy from carbohydrates. The mineral calcium, in dairy foods, green vegetables and nuts, builds strong bones and teeth, while iron, in meat, dried fruits and nuts, is important for healthy blood.

You can't digest all fiber found in foods such as bread, cereals, vegetables and fruits. But it's very important to your body. There are two main types — soluble and insoluble. Soluble fiber helps reduce blood cholesterol. Insoluble fiber makes your solid wastes bulky enough for you to get rid of them easily.



From **Burp!**
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Published by Kids Can Press Ltd.

Illustrations © 2001 Rose Cowles
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You Try It

Be a medical researcher. Track the number of servings of milk or milk products, such as yogurt, that every person in your family has each day. Record your findings for a week, figure out the daily average and compare it with what's recommended by nutrition experts below.

Notice how age and special conditions, such as pregnancy, affect these recommendations.



Recommended Daily Minimum Servings of Milk or Milk Products

| Age | Servings |
|-----------------|----------|
| Under 9 | 2 or 3 |
| 9 to 12 | 3 or 4 |
| Teens | 4 |
| Adults | 2 to 4 |
| Pregnant women | 3 to 4 |
| Nursing mothers | 3 to 4 |

Note: A serving size is about 250 mL (1 c.).