

ESSENTIAL FERTILITY VITAMINS & SUPPLEMENTS

Vitamins and minerals are a vital part of your daily diet, essential for body and organ health. If your daily diet is well balanced and consists of a variety of fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, chicken, fish, eggs, and seeds, you will probably be receiving sufficient vitamins and minerals. It is unlikely that you could ever consume more nutrients than your body can handle through eating natural foods, except by eating a large quantity of iron-rich offal, such as liver.

At The Zhai Clinic, we recommend introducing a small quantity of essential supplements to support the body in case the food we eat has lost its nutrients during cooking or storage. Those who have vegetarian, vegan, or other special diets may find it hard to get enough iron and vitamin B12 from natural sources.

Here are essential supplements for women and men who are trying to conceive:

Essential Supplements for Women

Folic acid: The recommended daily allowance of folic acid is between 400 and 800 mcg (micrograms). Multi-vitamin supplements that contain folic acid should not contain vitamin A as too much could harm your baby and cause birth defects. You should seek your doctor's advice on potentially taking a larger daily dose of folic acid if you have previously had a baby with spina bifida, you have coeliac disease, you have diabetes, or you are taking medicine for epilepsy.

Vitamin D: Vitamin D works with calcium and is essential for the creation of strong, healthy bones and protection against DNA damage. The recommended daily dosage for vitamin D is 5 mcg. The best source is sunlight, which the body naturally converts into vitamin D. Very few foods contain vitamin D—apart from oily fish, fortified margarines, and some breakfast cereals.

Vitamin C: Vitamin C (also known as ascorbic acid) is one of the antioxidant vitamins. It is vital for iron absorption, amino acid metabolism, healthy skin and eyes, and boosting the immune system. The recommended daily dose for vitamin C is 40-80 mg. It cannot be sore in the body, so it needs to be replenished daily. Food sources include citrus fruits, kiwi fruits, fresh green vegetables (particularly leafy greens, broccoli, and Brussels sprouts), sweet peppers, and sweet potatoes.

Iron: Iron is carried in the red blood cells where it helps carry oxygen and is also essential to keep the immune system healthy. Low iron levels have been linked to tiredness and can contribute to a failure to ovulate. Women need about 15 mg of iron per day. Vitamin C is needed to help absorb iron so try to combine them in a meal or supplement. Food sources include beef, pork, liver, poultry, vegetables (particularly dark green leafy vegetables such as spinach), whole grains, fish and seafood, dried beans and pulses, dried fruits, and nuts.

Calcium: Calcium is the most important mineral for building healthy bones and teeth in the mother and the developing fetus. It also helps blood to clot and muscles to contract. It regulates nerve function and blood pressure and the secretion of hormones. We need about 700 mg of calcium per day. Vitamin D is needed to help absorb calcium so try to combine them in a meal or supplement. Food sources include dairy products such as yogurt, milk, and cheese, calcium-fortified foods such as soy milk, bread, and cereals, dark green leafy vegetables, eggs, seeds, nuts, pulses, and meat and fish (but only in moderate amounts).

Essential Supplements for Men

Selenium: Selenium is a trace mineral that is essential for good health. It contributes to enzyme function and bone development, and helps transmit nerve impulses. It is found in every cell in the body and shows in the skin, hair, and nails. Selenium aids male fertility as it is required for prostaglandin production and good hormone balance. This includes the production of healthy sperm. The recommended daily dosage is 55 mcg (micrograms). Brazil nuts are a good source of selenium, so a

couple of Brazil nuts a day is beneficial. Walnuts, scallops, oysters, free-range eggs, and organic vegetables are also good sources of selenium. When taking a supplement, do not exceed the recommended dose as selenium is toxic in higher quantities.

Vitamin C: Vitamin C is necessary for iron absorption, amino acid metabolism, healthy skin and eyes, boosting the immune system, and helping to prevent DNA damage in male sperm. The recommended daily dosage is 80 mg. If you find your iron levels are low, it may help to drink orange juice with an iron-rich meal to increase absorption, or combine iron and vitamin C in a supplement. Vitamin C cannot be stored in the body, so it needs to be replenished daily. Food sources include citrus fruits, kiwi fruits, fresh green vegetables (particularly leafy greens, broccoli, and Brussels sprouts), sweet peppers, and sweet potatoes.

Vitamin E: This antioxidant fights inflammation, helps support cell membranes, and prevents the deterioration of body fats, particularly essential fatty acids and other unsaturated fats that are easily damaged. Foods rich in vitamin E include leafy green vegetables, seed oils, cereals, eggs, avocados, sweet potatoes, nuts, seeds, cod liver oil, and animal foods. Men need 12 mg per day.

Zinc: Zinc is needed for the formation of healthy bones and teeth, nails, hair, and skin. It has antioxidant activity that keeps your immune system strong. Zinc is needed by a developing fetus for formation of the skeleton, growth of the nervous system, and brain function. In men, the prostate gland has one of the highest concentrations of zinc in the body. It is responsible for the production of seminal fluid, in which the sperm swim and are nourished, and is involved in the production of the male hormone testosterone. It also has a role in maintaining a healthy libido. Zinc deficiency is associated with a low sperm count and reduced motility. Men need about 10 mg of zinc per day. Good dietary sources include meat, eggs, green vegetables, and seafood (especially oysters, scallops, prawns, lobster, cockles, mussels, and crab).

Our Zhai Fertility Supplements provide couples with all of the necessary vitamins and minerals—as well as fertility-boosting Chinese herbs—to give them the best possible chance for conception.