

# Prenatal Vitamins & Supplements



What you need to know:

---

Take a prenatal vitamin instead of individual vitamins or minerals to get the balanced amounts that you need during pregnancy. Taking additional supplements can be harmful to your baby, unless otherwise instructed by your healthcare provider.

---

## Why take a Prenatal Vitamin?

During pregnancy, you need increased amounts of some vitamins and minerals. This makes it difficult to get all that you need from the food that you eat. Your needs for folic acid and iron are especially high in pregnancy. Do not rely on vitamins to make up for an unhealthy diet during your pregnancy, a healthy diet is essential for the growth and development of your baby.

- **Folic Acid:** Folic Acid is a B Vitamin. It helps prevent serious birth defects. These birth defects can happen before a woman knows that she is pregnant. Folic Acid is important for any woman who could become pregnant. Most prenatal vitamins contain 400-800 mcg of Folic Acid, which is the recommended daily amount for pregnant women.
- **Iron:** Pregnant women also need extra Iron which carries oxygen to your cells. Most prenatal vitamins contain 27 milligrams of Iron which is the recommended daily amount to prevent iron deficiency anemia. Iron levels are checked periodically throughout your prenatal care.
- **Calcium:** Calcium is used to build your baby's bones and teeth. Prenatal vitamins typically do not include the recommended daily amount for Calcium, which is 1000 milligrams per day in a pregnant and lactating woman, making dietary supplementation necessary.
- **Omega-3 fatty acids (DHA/EPA):** DHA/EPA is essential for your baby's brain development both before and after birth. Most prenatal vitamins contain 200-300 milligrams of omega-3 fatty acids(DHA/EPA) which is the recommended amount in pregnancy.

## What about fortified foods?

Some fortified foods may help you meet your nutrient needs while you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

- **Folic Acid:** Enriched bread, flour, pasta, rice, and other grain products such as "ready to eat" cereals are all fortified with Folic Acid.
- **Iron:** Some "ready-to-eat" and cooked cereals, and some whole grains are fortified with Iron.
- **Vitamin-D:** All fluid milk including fat free and low-fat milk is fortified with Vitamin-D. Foods made from milk such as yogurt and some calcium-fortified fruit juices also have Vitamin-D added.

## Not all "Natural" products are safe

Avoid herbal products when you are pregnant or breastfeeding. They are not FDA tested or regulated like supplements and medications. If you are already taking a supplement or herbal products, please discuss with your provider. Natural/herbal products can interfere with other medications or supplements.