



Vitamin guidance changes with age

What vitamins should an 84-year-old man take? I am in good health and I do take vitamins, but I wonder if I should take more or less.

Men and women over age 50 need more calcium and vitamins D and B6 than younger adults. A multivitamin designed for senior adults would be a good place to start.

First, let's look at calcium. The recommended intake for both men and women increases at age 50 from 1,000 to 1,200 milligrams a day. The primary reason is to help prevent osteoporosis, a debilitating bone disease. You can get calcium from a variety of foods, with the best sources being dairy and calcium-fortified orange juice. Read Nutrition Facts labels, but generally, a cup of milk gives you 300 milligrams of calcium, while a cup of fortified orange juice offers 350. A 6-ounce container of flavored yogurt has about 250 milligrams. Other foods that often contain good amounts of calcium include cheese, broccoli, collard greens, tofu, almonds, and fortified cereals.

Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium. While the body can make its own vitamin D when exposed to sunlight, many older people aren't outdoors enough to produce much. Adults up to age 50 need just 5 micrograms a day, increasing to 10 between the ages of 50 and 70. People

over age 70 need 15 micrograms, or 600 IU (International Units), of vitamin D each day. A cup of fortified milk or juice has about one-sixth of that. Other good sources include certain kinds of fish, such as herring, salmon and tuna, but a supplement might be necessary to reach the recommended amount.

Vitamin B6 is important to keep homocysteine levels in check — the higher homocysteine is, the higher your risk of heart disease and stroke. It also helps the body use insulin, keep its immune system functioning and metabolize food. Men over age 50 should get 1.7 milligrams of vitamin B6 a day, while women need 1.5 milligrams. Younger adults need only 1.3 milligrams. Good sources of B6 include bananas, whole-wheat bread, chicken, eggs, oatmeal, peanut butter, pork, potatoes, brown rice, tuna, shellfish, and walnuts.

Whatever you do, talk with your doctor about any vitamins and minerals you take. Certain supplements can interfere with medications.

For more information, search for "Nutrition for Seniors" on <http://medlineplus.gov/>, a service of the U.S. National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@osu.edu.



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By Martha Filipic
(614) 292-9833
filipic.3@osu.edu

Editor:

This column was reviewed by Sharron Coplin, registered dietitian and Ohio State University Extension associate in the Department of Human Nutrition, College of Human Ecology.

To receive Chow Line electronically, send an e-mail to filipic.3@osu.edu or sign up to our news subscription service at <http://www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~news/subscribe.php>.

**Section of Communications
and Technology
News and Media Relations**
2021 Coffey Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1044
(614) 292-2011

208 Research Services
Building
1680 Madison Ave.
Wooster, OH 44691-4096
(330) 263-3780

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