



# Should we take a



How your family can benefit from **vitamins** and **supplements**.  
**Plus:** reader-approved picks for babies, kids, and grown-ups.

By Marygrace Taylor

**P**eople of all ages need vitamins and minerals to help their bodies grow and stay healthy. So does it really matter *how* we get them? Most experts say it does: Getting nutrients from a healthy, balanced diet is the way to go.

But any parent will tell you that this doesn't always happen—and some nutrients, like omega-3 fatty acids, vitamin D, and calcium—are too important to miss out on. If you or your child is falling short, a supplement can help you meet your daily requirement. “They’re not a replacement for eating healthy food, but families can use them as a safety net,” says Lawrence Rosen, M.D., an integrative pediatrician and KIWI contributing editor.

### What’s right for your family

If you’ve followed the news lately, taking vitamin and mineral supplements might give you pause. Some recent studies have announced scary links between supplements

and higher cancer risk and increased death rates. But that doesn't mean you automatically have to clear out your cabinet: “When you take a vitamin out of context, it becomes difficult for studies to make any claims or comments,” says Rosen, who points out that much of that recent research has been done on older adults who may have preexisting health problems. The studies also don't prove a clear cause-and-effect outcome, only an association, says Keri Marshall, a Washington, D.C.-based naturopathic doctor specializing in pediatrics. There could be other things that cause health issues, like the study subjects' diet and exercise habits.

The bottom line: If you or your child is missing out on an important nutrient, the benefits of a supplement outweigh any unproven risks. Talk with your doctor about your lifestyle (you don't spend much time in the sun, for instance) and the foods you eat on a regular basis. “When a patient has a deficiency or something that suggests a deficiency, I recommend a supplement,” Marshall says.

## Meet your supplements

	WHO MIGHT NEED IT	WHY IT'S IMPORTANT
Daily multivitamin	People with low nutrient intake, like picky eaters who aren't fans of fruits and vegetables, or those on low-calorie diets	A daily multi can act as a safety net to ensure any nutritional gaps in your diet are filled.
B-vitamin complex	Vegetarians and vegans	B vitamins help ward off fatigue, and a deficiency can cause anemia, but they're mostly found in meat, fish, eggs, and dairy.
Folic acid	Women who are pregnant or of childbearing age	It reduces the risk of major brain or spine defects in infants.
Vitamin C	Kids and adults who don't consume a lot of raw fruits and veggies or C-fortified foods	Vitamin C may strengthen your immune system, keeping you from getting sick.
Vitamin D	Breastfed infants (or infants who consume a formula not vitamin D-fortified), or people with darker skin or limited sun exposure	It aids in calcium absorption, cell growth, and immune function.
Calcium	Girls ages 9 to 18 (their requirement is higher than that of most others) and people who don't consume dairy products	Calcium is essential for building and maintaining strong bones and teeth.
Omega-3 essential fatty acids	People who don't consume at least two weekly servings of fatty fish (like salmon or albacore tuna) or non-fish sources like flaxseeds or walnuts.	They can reduce the risk of heart disease and high blood pressure; they may boost cognition, and ward off vision and nerve problems in babies.
Probiotics	Kids and adults, particularly those with stomach problems, who don't regularly consume probiotic-rich foods like yogurt, kefir, miso, or tempeh.	The good bacteria in probiotics keep immune systems healthy and aid in digestion and nutrient absorption. They might also help prevent eczema in kids.

### Liquid, chewable, or gummy?

Is one supplement delivery method better than the others? There's no right answer, but liquids can be better for younger kids because they tend to contain less sugar than gummies; chewables are great for older kids, says Rosen.

But we don't blame kids for preferring the candy-like gummies—just make sure they brush their teeth afterward.

## Choosing safe brands

Since 2007, the FDA has required that all dietary supplements meet current Good Manufacturing Practices (cGMP) regulations, meaning that manufacturers have to test a product's purity, strength, and composition. But since the waiting period for certification can be long, there are plenty of supplements on store shelves that aren't (or haven't yet been) certified, Marshall says. In June 2011, a bill was introduced to Congress that would tighten labeling requirements, obligating manufacturers to register their supplements with the FDA. A potential vote by the House of Representatives or Senate is still a long way off. But since manufacturers are already supposed to verify that their product meets cGMP standards, the bill is essentially an attempt to better enforce existing regulations.

“The cGMP standards are high, but the gold standard is for companies to be able to demonstrate true quality control measures, to show where vitamins and minerals are sourced,” Marshall says. So you don't have to automatically rule out a product because it doesn't meet cGMPs (remember, a manufacturer could be waiting to have their product certified): A supplement is also acceptable if it's been verified by a reputable, third-party program like NSF International or U.S. Pharmacopeia, says Marshall. Both certification systems ensure that a supplement contains what the label says it does—and that it's safe for families to take. All the winners of the KIWI Awards for Supplements (on page 26) have met the cGMP standards or been verified by one of these third parties.

SHUTTERSTOCK



# 2012 KIWI Awards for Supplements

Nearly 1,000 readers voted in our survey to choose their favorite supplement brands. Here are the winners!



## **ADULT MULTIVITAMIN** **#1 Nature's Way**

### **ADDITIONAL WINNERS:**

- ▶ 365 Everyday Value
- ▶ Rainbow Light
- ▶ Whole Foods Market



## **PRENATAL MULTIVITAMIN** **#1 Nature's Way**

### **ADDITIONAL WINNERS:**

- ▶ Rainbow Light
- ▶ 365 Everyday Value
- ▶ Whole Foods Market



## **CHILDREN'S MULTIVITAMIN** **#1 Nature's Plus Animal Parade**

### **ADDITIONAL WINNERS:**

- ▶ Nordic Naturals Nordic Berries
- ▶ Hero Nutritionals Yummi Bears
- ▶ Trader Joe's Gummi Vites



## **BABY MULTIVITAMIN** **#1 Nature's Plus Baby Plex**

### **ADDITIONAL WINNERS:**

- ▶ Rainbow Light NutriStart
- ▶ ChildLife Essentials Multi Vitamin & Mineral
- ▶ Twinlab Infant Care



## **ADULT CALCIUM** **#1 Nature's Way**

### **ADDITIONAL WINNERS:**

- ▶ 365 Everyday Value
- ▶ Whole Foods Market
- ▶ New Chapter



## **CHILDREN'S CALCIUM** **#1 Hero Nutritionals Yummi Bears**

### **ADDITIONAL WINNERS:**

- ▶ KAL Dinosaurs
- ▶ Northwest Natural Products L'il Critters
- ▶ Carlson for Kids



## **ADULT VITAMIN D** **#1 Nature's Way**

### **ADDITIONAL WINNERS:**

- ▶ Whole Foods Market
- ▶ Carlson Laboratories
- ▶ Nordic Naturals



## **CHILDREN'S VITAMIN D** **#1 Nature's Plus Animal Parade**

### **ADDITIONAL WINNERS:**

- ▶ Hero Nutritionals Yummi Bears
- ▶ Rainbow Light Sunny Gummies
- ▶ Northwest Natural Products L'il Critters



## **BABY VITAMIN D** **#1 ChildLife Essentials**

### **ADDITIONAL WINNERS:**

- ▶ Jarrow Formulas Yum-Yum
- ▶ Superior Source Infant Formula



## **ADULT OMEGA-3/DHA** **#1 Nordic Naturals**

### **ADDITIONAL WINNERS:**

- ▶ Nature's Way
- ▶ 365 Everyday Value
- ▶ TIE: Weil Nutritional Supplements and Whole Foods Market



## **CHILDREN'S OMEGA-3/DHA** **#1 Nordic Naturals Children's DHA**

### **ADDITIONAL WINNERS:**

- ▶ Nature's Way for Children
- ▶ Dr. Sears Family Essentials Fruit Chews
- ▶ Hero Nutritionals Yummi Bears



## **BABY OMEGA-3/DHA** **#1 Nordic Naturals Baby's DHA**

### **ADDITIONAL WINNERS:**

- ▶ Dr. Sears Family Essentials Infant & Toddler Drops
- ▶ ChildLife Essentials
- ▶ life'sDHA Brainstrong Toddler



## **VEGETARIAN OMEGA-3/DHA** **#1 Spectrum**

### **ADDITIONAL WINNERS:**

- ▶ Source Naturals
- ▶ life'sDHA
- ▶ Solaray



## **ADULT PROBIOTIC** **#1 Nature's Way**

### **ADDITIONAL WINNERS:**

- ▶ Culturelle
- ▶ 365 Everyday Value
- ▶ Garden of Life



## **CHILDREN'S PROBIOTIC** **#1 Nature's Way Primadophilus Kids**

### **ADDITIONAL WINNERS:**

- ▶ Culturelle for Kids
- ▶ Nature's Plus Animal Parade
- ▶ Jarrow Yum-Yum



## **ADULT VITAMIN C** **#1 Nature's Way**

### **ADDITIONAL WINNERS:**

- ▶ Garden of Life
- ▶ Rainbow Light
- ▶ MegaFood



## **CHILDREN'S VITAMIN C** **#1 Nature's Plus Animal Parade**

### **ADDITIONAL WINNERS:**

- ▶ Rainbow Light Gummy Vitamin C Slices
- ▶ KAL Dinosaurs
- ▶ ChildLife Essentials



## **VITAMIN B COMPLEX** **#1 Nature's Way**

### **ADDITIONAL WINNERS:**

- ▶ 365 Everyday Value
- ▶ Garden of Life
- ▶ Whole Foods Market



## **FOLIC ACID** **#1 Nature's Way**

### **ADDITIONAL WINNERS:**

- ▶ Whole Foods Market
- ▶ 365 Everyday Value
- ▶ Country Life

Thanks to the Parent Advisory Board for voting!  
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