

FitFUTURE

Strategies for
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Do Children Need Nutrition Supplements?

by Jennifer Kerr, MS, RD, CDN

To answer this question, start by asking yourself, does my child eat a variety of foods? Is he growing and developing properly? If the answers are “yes,” then he or she probably does not need a nutrition supplement. A combination of balanced meals and snacks should provide enough vitamins, minerals and other nutrients for growth, development and overall good health. Food is always the best source of nutrition.

However, if your child has a long-term feeding problem, or if you are concerned about his or her nutrient intake, seek medical advice, talk to your child's doctor or a registered dietitian. A nutrition supplement may be recommended if your child avoids an entire food group due to pickiness, a food allergy or intolerance; or if your child is a vegetarian/vegan.

If your health provider recommends a nutrient supplement for your child, the American Dietetic Association provides this advice:

- Choose a supplement with a childproof cap. Store it out of your child's reach.
- Give a supplement in the safe, recommended dose. Too much can be harmful.
- Remember: Supplements are just that – supplements – not an excuse to forgo smart eating.
- Remind children that supplements aren't candy, even if they come in fun names, colors, shapes and package design.
- Remember that enriched and fortified foods may have the same added nutrients that the supplement has.



To learn more about whether vitamin supplements are right for your kids:

American Dietetic Association, <http://www.eatright.org/kids>

