



Vitamins

Vitamin A

What is it?

The dietary form of Vitamin A is called retinol. The active form of retinol (active meaning the form most useful to your body as a vitamin) comes from animal products including eggs and liver. Your body can also take vitamin A precursors called carotenoids from fruits and vegetables and convert them to the active form of Vitamin A.

We absorb beta-carotene with the help of bile (from the liver) and we store any excess in our fat cells and in the liver. Vitamin A is fat-soluble.

Why do I need it?

Vitamin A deficiency is common in third world countries where many people have poor diet, but it is rarely seen in developed countries. The liver can store almost a two year supply of Vitamin A, and certain arctic animals including polar bears store so much Vitamin A that eating the liver of these animals can harm or kill a person. Most of us don't eat polar bears, so Vitamin A toxicity is not a common problem. Too much beta-carotene will turn your skin yellow, but will not cause Vitamin A poisoning.

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Where do I find it?

The best sources of Vitamin A are liver, dairy products, eggs, and any dark green or yellow orange vegetable.

Carrot, one medium	1015	RE
Sweet potato (1/2 cup)	1500	RE
Egg, one large	95	RE
Whole milk (1 cup)	75	RE
Tomato, one medium	35	RE
Beef liver, 3 oz. cooked	9106	RE

How much do I need?

We measure Vitamin A in units called RE or retinol equivalents. Females need 1000 RE per day and males need 800 RE daily. You should not need to supplement Vitamin A since you can see a normal diet supplies plenty of the vitamin for the average adult.

You need only very tiny amounts of these nutrients, but vitamins are absolutely essential for your health.

