



Essential Nutrients for Healthy Babies

In utero, your baby receives essential nutrients through the womb. However, once your baby is born, he must obtain these vital building blocks from the food and drink you provide. Since essential nutrients don't work alone but synergistically with other vitamins and minerals, how they are introduced to your baby has a vital impact on how well they are absorbed and utilized by his developing body.

Fresh, whole foods provide not only an abundance—but also a wide, balanced variety—of the essential nutrients your baby needs to thrive. Here's an informational overview of some of the most important essential nutrients every baby needs:

Antioxidants – Vitamins and other nutrients that protect the body from damage caused by oxidants, also known as free radicals, which can cause the breakdown of cells.

Antioxidants found in foods high in Vitamin A, C and E are believed to be the most beneficial

B Vitamins

Thiamin – Helps maintain energy supplies and proper nerve function.

High levels of Thiamin are found in foods such as tuna fish, beans (pinto and black), rice cereal, lentils, green beans and corn.

Niacin - Helps with the production and metabolism of energy by stabilizing blood sugars. Niacin can also help relieve skin infections and digestive problems.

Foods high in Niacin include salmon, tuna, chicken, rice cereal, asparagus, halibut and turkey.

Riboflavin – Plays a critical role in the body's energy production. It also protects cells from oxygen damage.

Soybeans, yogurt, plums, rice cereal and spinach all contain high levels of Riboflavin.

Vitamin B6 – Important for the proper breakdown of sugars and starches. This vitamin is involved in the production of red blood cells and is vital to the activities of the nervous system.

Many meats and fish are high in Vitamin B6, such as tuna, salmon, chicken, turkey and beef, as well as a variety of fruits and vegetables, including spinach, bell peppers, broccoli and bananas.

Vitamin B12 – Helps the production of red blood cells and can prevent anemia. Also metabolizes proteins and fats.

Excellent sources of Vitamin B12 include salmon, snapper, yogurt and cow's milk.

Vitamin A (Beta Carotene) - Antioxidant that helps protect the body from free radicals and enhances the function of the immune system. Beta Carotene also helps the eyes adjust to see in the dark.

Food sources containing Beta Carotene include sweet potatoes, green beans, carrots, spinach, peaches, mangos, papayas, apricots and winter squash.

Calcium – Critical for strong bones and teeth. Also helps muscle and nerve functions, and assists with blood clotting.

Calcium-rich foods include milk, milk products and dark leafy vegetables, such as spinach.

Copper – Antioxidant that helps the body utilize iron. Also helps reduce tissue damage caused by free radicals, and maintains the health of bones and connective tissue.

Copper can be found in asparagus, pears, summer squash, eggplant, barley and kiwi.

Fiber, Dietary – Complex carbohydrate that supports bowel regularity and helps maintain normal blood sugar and cholesterol levels.

Fiber can be found in most whole grains, including rice cereal, barley, whole wheat cereals and oats.

Many fruits, legumes and vegetables are also rich sources of Fiber, such as broccoli, beets, cauliflower, lentils, mangos, pumpkins and various types of berries.

Folate – Supports cell production and helps in disease prevention. Folate helps the building of red blood cells, aiding in the prevention of anemia.

Spinach, lettuce, lentils, black and garbanzo beans, green beans, peas, broccoli, berries and beets are all foods that contain high levels of Folate.

Iron – Aids in oxygen distribution in the body and helps maintain a healthy immune system. Also vital to the development of mental and motor skills.

Iron-rich foods include beef, pork, oats, quinoa, whole wheat cereals and breads, spinach and lentils.

Lutein and Zeaxanthin – Defend the body against harmful effects of free radicals and help support eye health.

Food sources of Lutein and Zeaxanthin include zucchini, broccoli, corn, peas and spinach.

Magnesium – Vital for the function of the nervous, immune and muscular systems. Helps build strong bones and promotes proper blood circulation.

Oats, whole wheat, quinoa, pumpkin, summer squash, spinach, broccoli, lentils and halibut are some Magnesium-rich foods.

Manganese – Antioxidant that helps to keep bones strong and healthy. Also helps the body utilize various nutrients.

High levels of Manganese can be found in brown rice, pineapple, soybeans, oats, quinoa, beans, tofu, beets, eggplant, sweet potatoes and various berries.

Omega 3 Fatty Acids – Protect against heart disease by preventing excessive blood clotting, and contribute to the body's ability to regulate food intake, metabolism and weight. Also shown to prevent cancer growth.

Omega 3 Fatty Acids can be found in flaxseeds, salmon, soybeans, walnuts, cauliflower and winter squash.

Phosphorous – Helps to build bones and teeth. This mineral is also a component of DNA and RNA, which are essential elements of all living cells.

Barley, quinoa, yogurt, cheese, lentils and various meats, including fish, are all rich sources of Phosphorus.

Potassium – Important for maintaining fluid balance in the body, and helping muscles and nerves function correctly. Many fruits, vegetables and meats contain Potassium.

Some of the highest levels can be found in broccoli, orange juice, avocados, bananas, soybeans, spinach, zucchini, apricots and pomegranates.

Protein – Compounds made of amino acids that help the immune system function properly, and maintain healthy skin, hair and nails.

Meats such as fish, chicken and beef are all protein-rich foods. Soybeans and tofu are also excellent sources of Protein.

Selenium – An antioxidant that is important for cell growth and the proper functioning of the thyroid gland.

Meats, whole grain cereals, nuts, fish and eggs contain some of the highest levels of Selenium.

Vitamin C – A vitamin and antioxidant shown to lower the risk of many ailments, including cancer. Vitamin C improves iron absorption and protects the body from infection.

Many fruits and vegetables are high in Vitamin C, including apples, pears, oranges, berries, broccoli, leafy greens, beans and pineapple.

Vitamin D – Regulates the growth and activities of cells, and is associated with the prevention of numerous chronic diseases, including cancer, heart disease and diabetes.

Vitamin D is readily found in salmon, as well as fortified foods, including whole eggs and cow's milk.

Vitamin E – A powerful antioxidant that protects against the damaging effects of free radicals while maintaining healthy skin.

Vitamin E is abundantly available in many vegetable oils, and is also found in almonds, fish, whole grains and green, leafy vegetables.

Vitamin K – Allows blood to clot normally in order to stop bleeding.

Vitamin K is normally produced in the intestines, but can also be found in spinach, broccoli, avocados, kiwi, cow's milk, eggs, soybeans and other soy products.

Zinc – Essential element that is vital for sustaining life. Zinc balances blood sugar, helps maintain a healthy immune system, and is important for the perception of tastes and smells.

Zinc can be found in many meats and fish, as well as in nuts, whole grain breads and legumes.