Vitamins and Minerals in Kidney Disease

Vitamins and minerals are important for everyone's good health. Now that you are on dialysis, you will need to know which vitamins and minerals you can use in the form of supplements.

What are vitamins and minerals?

Vitamins and minerals are substances needed by your body to help carry out special functions. They help your body use the foods you eat. They are needed to make energy, promote growth and repair and replace many types of body tissues. Kidney disease changes your body's need for certain vitamins and minerals.

Will I need to take vitamin and mineral supplements?

Almost all vitamins and minerals come from the foods you eat. Your body does not make these substances. Healthy people who can eat foods from all the food groups eat a variety of meats, grains, fruits, vegetables and dairy products. Your kidney diet limits some food groups, and therefore, you may not be getting all the vitamins and minerals you need each day. It may be important for you to take certain amounts of some vitamins and minerals in the form of supplements.

Why do I need different amounts of vitamins and minerals?

Kidney disease changes your need for some nutrients. Some of the reasons are listed below:

The poisons that build up in your body each day can change the way your body uses vitamins and minerals. Also, some of the medicines you take can also change the way your body uses certain vitamins and minerals. Your dialysis causes some vitamins to be lost during your treatment. A complete list of reasons can be found in our free brochure, "Vitamins and Minerals in Kidney Disease." You can obtain a copy by calling 800 622-9010.

What supplements will I need to take?

Your doctor will probably want you to take vitamin C and a group of vitamins called B complex. Sometimes, your doctor may need to write a prescription for these.

You will also need to take an iron pill or have iron given during your hemodialysis treatment if you are taking EPO. You should only take iron if your doctor orders it for you.

You will also take a calcium tablet used to bind the phosphorous from your food. This serves to give you the extra calcium your body needs.

How does my body use these vitamins and minerals?

Vitamin C is used to keep many different types of tissue healthy. It also helps wounds and bruises heal faster and may help prevent infections.

B complex vitamins are grouped together, but each has a different job to do. One of the important functions of vitamin B6, B12 and folic acid is to work together with EPO and iron to prevent anemia.

Additional B vitamins, called thiamine, riboflavin, panthothenic acid and niacin, can also be given as a supplement. These vitamins help to change the foods you eat into energy your body can use.

Calcium along with vitamin D helps to keep your bones healthy. Vitamin D can be given in a special pill form called vitamin D3. This vitamin can also be given during your hemodialysis treatment so you do not have to take it in a pill form. Either form has to be ordered by your doctor.

Talk with your doctor or dietitian before taking any vitamins that are not ordered for you.

Is it safe to use herbal remedies?

Very little is actually known about these remedies. Some of them may actually be harmful to dialysis patients. Always speak to your doctor before using any herbal remedies, over-the-counter-medicines, or supplements.

What if I have more questions?

If you have more questions, be sure to speak to your kidney doctor or dietitian. They can help you learn about your vitamins and mineral supplements. Your social worker may be able to answer questions about how to pay for your supplements. Sometimes, your insurance or medical assistance will pay for them. You can also order a free copy of our brochure by calling 800 622-9010.

Source: "Vitamins and Minerals in Kidney Disease"

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