Important Nutrients to Know: Vitamins and Minerals

Vitamins

Vitamins help your body grow and work the way it should. There are 13 vitamins—vitamins C, A, D, E, K, and the B vitamins (thiamine, riboflavin, niacin, pantothenic acid, biotin, B6, B12, and folate).

Vitamins have different jobs—helping you resist infections, keeping your nerves healthy, and helping your body get energy from food or your blood to clot properly.

Minerals

Minerals also help your body function. Some minerals, like iodine and fluoride, are only needed in very small quantities. Others, such as calcium, magnesium, and potassium, are needed in larger amounts.

Calcium

Calcium is a mineral which is important for strong bones and teeth. You can get calcium from milk and milk products, some forms of tofu, dark-green leafy vegetables, soybeans, canned sardines and salmon with bones, and calcium-fortified foods.

Sodium

Sodium is another mineral. In most Americans’ diets, sodium primarily comes from salt (sodium chloride), though it is naturally found in some foods. Sodium is also added to others during processing, often in the form of salt. We all need some sodium, but too much over time can contribute to raising your blood pressure or put you at risk for heart disease, stroke, or kidney disease.