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### **Should I be taking a vitamin and mineral supplement?**

You and your doctor should decide if you need to take vitamin supplements. However, here are some factors you may want to consider before talking with your doctor.

- Teen girls and women of childbearing age may need to take an iron supplement if they do not consume enough dietary iron. Heme-iron from meats is the best source of iron. Plant foods such as beans and spinach contain nonheme-iron and should be consumed with a source of vitamin C.
- Pregnant women and women of childbearing age should talk with their doctor about the need for folic acid. The best dietary source of folic acid is fortified foods such as breakfast cereals.
- Adults over the age of 50 years may need to consume vitamin B12 in supplement form if they do not consume enough dietary B12. The best dietary source of B12 is fortified foods such as breakfast cereals.
- Older adults and people with dark skin may need to get their vitamin D from supplements or fortified foods such as milk.

Other questions to consider are:

- Do you eat fewer than two meals a day?
- Do you take more than three prescription medicines a day?
- Do you have more than three alcoholic drinks a day?
- Have you lost more than 10 pounds without wanting to?

To find science-based information about vitamin and mineral supplements go to: <http://www.nutrition.gov>. The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service offers free and low-cost nutrition and health programs. Please contact your local County Extension Agent for more information.

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[http://www.nutrition.gov/nal\\_display/index.php?info\\_center=11&tax\\_level=2&tax\\_subject=393&topic\\_id=1939&placement\\_default=0](http://www.nutrition.gov/nal_display/index.php?info_center=11&tax_level=2&tax_subject=393&topic_id=1939&placement_default=0)