



Vitamins, minerals and fibre

Vitamins and minerals give strong bones and blood and help prevent disease. **FIBRE** helps keep your **DIGESTIVE SYSTEM** in good order.

For healthy living we need small amounts of some rather special substances called **VITAMINS** and **MINERALS**.

Vitamins

Vitamins are chemicals that help the body work well. They are especially important in helping the body fight illness. There are many vitamins in food, the most common are vitamins A, B and C.

Vitamin C is found in milk, fresh fruits and vegetables (Picture 1).

Without it, the skin weakens, gums start to bleed and the joints become sore. This disease is called scurvy. In the past, lack of vitamin C was the major cause of death for sailors. Before refrigeration, sailors could not take fresh fruit and vegetables on long journeys. Scurvy was the first disease found to be caused by a bad diet, although many more have been found since.

◀▶ (Picture 1) Vitamins are found naturally in many fruits. Some people take extra vitamins in the form of pills, but this should not be necessary for young people.



Vitamin pills





◀▶ (Picture 2) Cow's milk is rich in vitamin D and calcium.



Minerals

Minerals, such as calcium, are used mainly in the bones and the blood. Calcium makes bones strong so they can support the body. It also makes teeth hard so they can bite and chew food. Milk, cheese, eggs, peanuts, carrots and oranges are examples of foods that contain large amounts of calcium (Picture 2).

Iron is another important mineral. It makes the red colouring in blood and helps carry oxygen from our lungs to other parts of the body where it is needed. Iron is found in many green vegetables and in naturally dark red drinks, such as cranberry juice.

Fibre

Your body uses just tiny amounts of the chemicals it needs. The rest passes right through. This unused material we call fibre. Some people call it 'roughage'. Fibre is good for us because it keeps the digestive system working properly.

Without a regular movement of material through our digestive system, many diseases develop. Beans (Picture 3) and bran contain fibre, as does wholemeal bread, other cereals, potatoes and dried fruits such as prunes and figs (Picture 4).



Black beans



Butter beans



Black-eyed beans



Haricot beans



Kidney beans

▶ (Picture 3) Most beans contain useful amounts of fibre.



▶ (Picture 4) Dried figs and other dried fruits contain lots of fibre.

Summary

- Vitamins help prevent disease.
- Calcium is important for bones.
- Iron is important in the blood.
- Fibre is important for keeping the digestion working well.