Building your strongest nutritional foundation begins with two basic steps: eating a balanced nutritious diet and taking a high-quality daily multiple vitamin and mineral supplement. This back-to-basics strategy has proven effective for young and old alike.

A wide range of “multis” is available at your local natural health store. Choose from tablets, chewable tablets, hard gelatin capsules, soft gelatin capsules, vegetarian capsules and tablets, daily packs, powders, and liquids.

Here’s what’s in your basic multi and why it’s so good for you.

**Vitamin A** comes from fat- or water-soluble sources. Some multiples contain both forms. Halibut and cod liver oil, beta carotene, and palmitate are common sources of vitamin A. Always select a multi made with natural, not synthetic, sources of beta carotene.

Mixed natural carotenoids are ideal. Most multiples contain a range of 2,500 to 25,000 IU of vitamin A. Your immune system and skin will benefit.

**Vitamin B complex** includes: B₁ (thiamine), B₂ (riboflavin), B₃ (niacin or niacinamide), B₅ (pantothenic acid), B₆ (pyridoxine), B₉ (folic acid), B₁₂ (cobalamin), biotin, and PABA. Co-nutrients of the B family include the lipotropic factors, choline and inositol. The general potency range of most B vitamins is 25 to 50 mg. B₁₂ levels range from 25 to 1,000 mcg, while folic acid potencies vary from 400 to 1,000 mcg. Vitamin B complex fights stress, boosts energy, and combats depression.

**Vitamin C** sources are primarily from ascorbic acid and calcium ascorbate. Mineral ascorbates and sago palm sources are also available. Ideally, your multi will include bioflavonoids, which help reduce bruising, inflammation, and bleeding gums. The average recommended range of vitamin C in a multi is 100 to 250 mg.

**Vitamin D** is the fat-soluble sunshine vitamin, but cloudy weather and sunscreens often limit our absorption.
Vitamin D₃ (cholecalciferol) from animal sources and D₂ (ergocalciferol) from plant sources are most frequently used in potencies of 200 to 400 IU. Recent research has elevated vitamin D to super-nutrient status for its value in combating multiple sclerosis and inflammatory bowel disease.

**Vitamin E** is, technically, a fat-soluble vitamin, but acts more as a water-soluble nutrient in the body. Choose multis formulated with natural-source E from alpha and mixed tocopherols. Synthetic sources provide less than half the bioavailability of natural sources. Vitamin E potencies in multis average from 25 to 100 IU.

**Calcium** sources are often combined together to boost potency and absorption. The most frequently used sources are citrate, chelate, and carbonate. A daily multi in single tablet form will only have room to provide about 60 mg, but a vitamin pack can provide 1,000 mg or more.

**Chromium** from citrate and chelate sources in potencies from 25 to 200 mcg is commonly available. Diabetics and people with metabolic syndrome have shown significant improvements in blood chemistry when using chromium.

**Copper** is not always included in multis but when included, copper dosages are usually kept under 3 mg. Some vitamin users have determined through testing that they already have too much copper in their systems and choose multis without copper.

**Iodine** from gluconate or potassium iodide is found in most multis with a dosage of 0.1 to 0.3 mg. Optimal levels of iodine prevent the thyroid gland from absorbing atmospheric radioactivity.

**Iron** is critically important for people with iron deficiency. Since iron is only recommended for people with low iron levels, many multis no longer include iron. Better absorbed sources of iron are ferrous citrate, gluconate, fumarate, and chelate.

**Magnesium** from citrate or chelated sources is preferred for better absorption. Many premium quality formulations provide at least half as much magnesium as calcium, ranging from 30 mg in single tablets to 500 mg in daily multiple packets. Magnesium is critical to heart and bone health.

**Manganese** potencies vary from 1 to 15 mg. Citrate, gluconate, and chelate forms are common. In combination with other antioxidant nutrients, manganese reduces the build-up of plaque on arterial walls.

**Potassium** citrate or chelate are the most common supplemental sources in multis. The potency can range from 25 to 100 mg. This electrolyte helps reduce water retention.

**Selenium** should always be included in your multiple vitamin and mineral formulation unless you take it as a separate supplement. The range of selenium potencies is from 25 to 100 mcg. Hundreds of studies have proven selenium’s cancer-fighting power.

**Silicon** from horsetail extract or silicon dioxide in potencies of 2 to 5 mg is included in some formulations. There is evidence that it supports bone remineralization.

**Sulphur** from methlysulfonylmethane (MSM) has recently been added to multi formulations in minor dosages of 5 to 10 mg.

**Vanadium** citrate or chelate is included in dosage ranges from 10 to 75 mcg and works synergistically with chromium to stabilize blood sugar levels.

**Molybdenum** citrate or chelate is generally included in potencies of 25 to 75 mcg. Many allergy-prone individuals have shown improvements in symptoms by using molybdenum.

**Zinc** citrate and chelate provide the preferred sources of this mineral, which is most commonly available in 5 to 15 mg potencies. Zinc acts as an immune system support mineral and protects the prostate gland.

Additional multiple vitamin and mineral ingredients often include a natural source base of enzymes, fatty acids, phytonutrients, herbs, and flavonoids.

For about 50 cents a day, you can protect and improve your health by taking a multiple vitamin and mineral every morning with breakfast. What a great investment!

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