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## Should You Take a Multivitamin? Experts Weigh In

You know you should be [flossing](#) daily (along with making your bed, and [washing your face](#), and a million other little things). But should you add [taking a multivitamin](#) to that list? The short answer: Yes, according to the experts we asked. Here's why.



# WHY YOU SHOULD BE TAKING A MULTIVITAMIN

**1. It comes down to diet.** In an ideal world, we would all eat a perfectly balanced, predominantly plant-based diet on the daily. In reality, we've had cereal for dinner at least twice this week and haven't even glanced at a green vegetable in 48 hours. If that's you, most experts, like Dr. Sherry Ross, OB/GYN and women's health expert at [Providence Saint John's Health Center](#) in Santa Monica, CA, suggest that popping a daily multivitamin can help cover nutrient gaps by providing what you need to feel your best. "The best way to get all your necessary vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants is through a well-balanced and colorful diet," says Dr. Ross. "The problem is the average diet can leave gaps in your daily nutritional requirements, which means you are missing out on vital elements your body needs to function optimally." **Dr. Niket Sonpal, an internist and gastroenterologist based in NYC**, calls vitamins "nutritional insurance." Just be cautious: Supplements can tide you over when you've had a crazy week, but ultimately they're just that — supplemental. Vitamins are not a cure-all nor cover-up for a chronically poor diet.

**2. It's a brave new world.** The sad part, however, is that even if you are consuming a rainbow of fruits and veggies daily, current farming practices have so devastatingly depleted the soil in which crops are grown that even organic produce isn't nearly as chockfull of nutrients as it was during our great-grandparents' time. To counter this — as well as the fact that more and more of our food is refined and processed — many packaged foods are fortified with vitamins commonly missing from our diet, including folate, calcium, vitamins C and D, says Dr. Ross. But that still may not be enough to meet the recommended dietary allowance (RDA) for everyone. Additionally, "our modern lifestyle presents challenges that require higher levels of many nutrients," says [Dr. David Teitelbaum](#), internist, author, and fibromyalgia expert, and we may not be able to adequately get those from food alone. Dr. Teitelbaum adds that the body is faced with detoxifying more than 85,000 chemicals that are new to our environment, and also has to tackle the constant, chronic stress of daily life.

**3. Nutrient deficiencies are fairly common.** According to the most recent [nutrition report](#) by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one in 10 people has at least one nutritional deficiency. In women, the

most common culprits are vitamin D, calcium, iron, omega-3 fatty acids, and vitamin B12 (especially for those following a vegan diet). “You should definitely do your dietary homework and find out what your daily diet is missing,” says Dr. Ross. A food tracker like [MyFitnessPal](#) or [Cronometer](#) can give you a glimpse into how you stack up.

**4. Not all vitamins are created equal.** When you’re ready to take the plunge, start by \*really\* reading the labels. “Since there’s no standard formula for multivitamins, composition can vary greatly,” says Rachel Fine, RD and owner of [To The Pointe Nutrition](#), a nutrition counseling firm in NYC. Add to that the fact that your needs from a multivitamin may differ from those of your mom or your best friend, and it can be downright daunting. It’s also hard to really know what you’re buying: Supplements are largely unregulated by the FDA, though some companies do undergo stringent third-party testing. Not sure where to start? Here are four multivitamin companies that are making your search simpler.

## 4 MULTIVITAMIN OPTIONS TO CONSIDER



**1. Ritual (\$30/month):** Committed to creating a multivitamin with exactly what most women require and nothing more, Ritual is a pared-down capsule with just nine elements that are hardest to find in the average diet. And with their super-transparent sourcing, you know exactly what you're getting and where it came from.



**2. GEM (\$39/month or \$49/single purchase):** GEM takes food-based to the next level. A sustainably sourced, plant-based multivitamin chewable that's not in pill form, GEM bites are actual food made from real ingredients, including more than 15 essential vitamins, minerals and herbs for optimal health. Choose lemon or peppermint and nosh one bite per day.



**3. Care/of (starts around \$20/month):** The scientific advisory board behind Care/of believes that each person is “unique and has different diets, bodies, lifestyles and health goals, so each vitamin and supplement regimen should be unique to your own health routine.” Start by taking a quick quiz on your lifestyle and values, and Care/of will craft a supplement pack perfectly tailored to your needs. They also offer Quick Sticks, mini powder packs of probiotics (Gut Check), melatonin (Dream Team) or GABA (Chill Factor) to boost health on your busiest days.



**4. Routine (\$85/month; 3-month minimum):** Routine uses three data points — DNA, blood levels, and lifestyle habits — to create totally custom vitamin packs with a unique micronutrient mix and dosage level. Take a mini quiz, submit the included DNA and lab results, and their genetic experts will send you a three-month supply of a slow-release (and super pretty) microbead formula designed exclusively for you.

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