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Q: Does my child need to take a multi-vitamin supplement?



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A: If your child is not eating a nutritious diet including a wide variety of foods (including fruits and vegetables) on a regular basis, a multi-vitamin supplement may be recommended.

Typically you can meet your child's body's nutrient needs with a healthy diet – including whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables, lean meat, poultry and fish, and a variety of low fat dairy products (milk, yogurt and cheese).

In addition, a body needs adequate hydration, essential fatty acids (omega 3 and 6), fiber, and water/fat soluble vitamins and minerals – all which can come from a healthy, balanced diet.

When I recommend a multi-vitamin, it is because the child is typically not eating enough fruits and vegetables, and consuming too many processed breads, cereals and pastas, fruit juice and packaged foods.

These types of foods are processed, which can not only zap the nutrients that they might have provided to the body, but also change the nutrients making it more difficult for our bodies to absorb any nutrients they might have.

The key is a balanced diet. If the diet is lacking or inadequate in any of the food groups, it is difficult to get in all of the nutrients our body needs. Each food provides a variety of different nutrients, so even if you eat the same healthy food every day (like broccoli for instance) you may not be getting the other essential nutrients a body needs to function correctly.

Without adequate nutrition – our body tends to run out of energy, our bones may not grow to their fullest potential, our hair, skin, and nails may become brittle, and much more. Chronic malnutrition—where it has happened for some years –may lead to serious life threatening conditions.

A multi-vitamin with minerals can help supplement your child's diet; however, it is always best to get as much nutrition through the diet as possible since the body absorbs these nutrients the best.

Be sure to talk with your doctor before starting your child on any type of supplement. Vitamins and minerals are not regulated by the FDA and some may contain food allergens and/or other ingredients that may not be safe for your child. In addition, vitamins and minerals come in many different shapes and forms – some have added Iron, Calcium, minerals, etc. Be sure to read the label and take as prescribed by your physician.