

Leicestershire Adult Eating Disorders Service

Leicestershire Adult Eating Disorders Service Vitamin and Mineral Supplements

This leaflet is written to provide you with some information and advice about vitamin and mineral supplements. The aim of this leaflet is to provide you with information that is important to you, not to worry you or upset you. The information contained in this leaflet may raise questions to discuss with your doctor or therapist.

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MULTIVITAMINS

If your body mass index (BMI) is below 17.5, and you have had a long period of poor nutrition, both your vitamin and mineral intake and stores of vitamins and minerals in your body will be low. This is rarely life-threatening, but it may cause a variety of short term and long term health problems including dry skin, hair loss, brittle bones, anaemia, sores on your lips and any wounds you have may take longer to heal.

Ideally, we should aim to meet all our vitamin and mineral requirements by eating a healthy balanced diet and maintaining a healthy weight. However, if you are working towards this during your recovery, then taking a general multivitamin and multi mineral supplement can be useful as a short term support.

It is important to remember that some vitamins and minerals are fat soluble so without some fat in the diet you cannot absorb and benefit from these supplements. They cannot be a replacement for food.

These supplements can be obtained from the chemist or from your GP. You will need to ask the chemist for a general multivitamin and multi mineral. Some examples are Forceval, Sanatogen Gold or an A-Z multivitamin. If you are getting these from the chemist, please do not exceed the recommended dose. If you prefer to get them from your doctor, then please discuss this with your GP.

The supplements should be taken regularly until your weight has been restored over BMI 17.5 for a period of at least 6 months.

CALCIUM AND VITAMIN D

If your body mass index (BMI) is below 17.5 then it is likely that you will have low calcium and low vitamin D levels due to poor diet. Calcium and vitamin D are important in preventing osteoporosis (thinning of the bones).

We therefore recommend that you take supplements of these while you are underweight. There are available preparations which combine calcium and vitamin D in one tablet.

These supplements can be obtained from the chemist or from your GP.

If you are getting these from the chemist, you should be looking a preparation which offers 1000mg of calcium a day and 10-20mcg (which is the same as 400-800 iu) of vitamin D a day. You should take the calcium in divided doses, so something like 500mg twice a day.

If you would prefer to get the supplements from your doctor then please discuss this with your GP. Your GP may suggest preparations such as Adcal D3 or Calcichew D3 Forte.

The supplements should be taken regularly until your weight is restored over BMI 17.5 for a period of at least 6 months.

You can also boost your calcium levels by eating enough dairy foods in your diet. A recommended amount is one pint of dairy milk a day (any type of milk) or 3 portions of dairy foods a day e.g. 1 yoghurt, one match box-sized portion of cheese and 1/3 pint milk.

Do be aware that whilst these supplements may reduce the risk of osteoporosis, the only way to guard against it completely is to gain weight and, if your periods have stopped, to start menstruating again.

If you decide to ask your GP to prescribe any of these supplements for you please take this advice leaflet with you to show your GP