



# Animal, MINERAL or Vegetable

Story | ANGELA AMBROSE

Most minerals aid in body metabolism, water balance and bone health, but they can aid in other small ways to effectively boost health as well.

Minerals play a critical role in maintaining a healthy body and help reduce your risk of cancer, diabetes and heart disease. When you are deficient in minerals, it can cause a wide range of symptoms from muscle spasms and abdominal bloating to catching colds more frequently.

“Minerals and vitamins are the fundamental building blocks for how your body heals, repairs and maintains itself, and without them disease happens,” says Dr. Peter Osborne, board-certified in clinical nutrition and author of *No Grain, No Pain*.

To function properly, the body requires a number of different essential minerals. Iron deficiency is the most common nutritional disorder in the world, according to the World Health Organization. Low iron levels

may result in anemia, which can cause fatigue, headache and shortness of breath.

Another common mineral deficiency is calcium, which is needed for strong bones and teeth. One of the most important minerals is magnesium, which is involved in more than 300 functions in the human body including regulation of blood sugar. Many medications, such as blood pressure and heartburn, can deplete magnesium. When magnesium and calcium levels are low, they can cause muscle tightness and cramps.

The amount of minerals your body needs depends on many factors including your diet, environment, gastrointestinal health and medications taken on a regular basis. “Eating the proper foods is absolutely the best way to get your minerals,”

Osborne says. “A diverse diet of real whole foods is critical: organic fruits and vegetables and nuts, combined with grass-fed meats. And if you’re eating fish, make sure it’s caught wild in the oceans, rivers or streams because farm-raised fish is very low in nutritional density.”

Green, leafy vegetables such as kale, spinach and broccoli provide high amounts of magnesium, potassium and calcium. Grass-fed, pasture-raised red meat is your highest source of iron and zinc that is readily digested. Choosing locally grown, organic produce cuts down on the amount of pesticides and chemicals, which can interfere with mineral absorption.

Some conditions can increase your risk for mineral deficiency such as Crohn’s, ulcerative colitis and celiac diseases; gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) treated with antacid medications; and regular use of non-steroidal inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs),

blood pressure medications or antibiotics.

Depending on the cause of your mineral deficiency, supplements may be necessary, but before taking them, consult with a doctor who has nutritional training or who is board-certified in this area. Getting too much or too little of some minerals can be detrimental to your health. ✦

## AM I MINERAL DEFICIENT?

The most accurate way to find out is through a SpectraCell micronutrient blood test that your doctor can order. This test evaluates the nutritional status within your cells and is the gold standard for measuring specific minerals and vitamins. By pinpointing deficiencies early on, you can reduce your chance of a host of diseases and make healthy lifestyle changes.