



# Toogood Nutrition

## Discover the Power of Zinc

This quick-start guide introduces the power of zinc, how much you need, and what foods contain a rich source.

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## **Zinc is an essential nutrient people need for optimal health.**

The body requires zinc for many jobs, like:

- Making proteins and DNA — the genetic material in all cells.
- Support growth and development during pregnancy, infancy, childhood, and adolescence.
- Support the immune system to help fight off invading bacteria and viruses.
- Help wounds heal.
- Requires for a good sense of taste and smell.

Your body doesn't produce zinc naturally, so you must get it through food or supplementation. This quick-start guide answers the key questions you might have about this essential mineral.

# How much zinc do we need?

As we age, the body's ability to absorb zinc changes, so the amount of zinc required each day depends on your age. The range in the right side, developed by the Food and Nutrition Board (FNB) at the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, can help you find your recommended dietary allowance (RDA).

Most people who consume a varied diet rich in whole foods get adequate zinc intake in their diet. However, zinc is available in most multivitamins and as a stand-alone supplement.

Excess zinc intake and toxicity may cause reduced immunity and other severe complications. Consult your doctor or dietitian to determine deficiency and whether a supplement is needed.

***\*Vegetarians and vegans may require 50% more of the recommended daily allowance (RDA) for zinc than meat-eaters.***

Life stage	RDA
Birth to 6 months	2 mg
Infants 7–12 months	3 mg
Children 1–3 years	3 mg
Children 4–8 years	5 mg
Children 9–13 years	8 mg
Teens 14–18 years (boys)	11 mg
Teens 14–18 years (girls)	9 mg
Adults (men)	11 mg
Adults (women)	8 mg
Pregnant women	11 mg
Breastfeeding women	12 mg



# What happens if we don't get enough zinc?

Zinc deficiency is rare in people with varied diets in the modern world.

Still, it can occur in:

- People with rare genetic mutations.
- Breastfeeding infants whose mothers don't have enough zinc.
- People with alcohol dependency whose diets commonly lack quality through addiction.

Zinc deficiency causes:

- Slow growth in infants and children,
- Hair loss,
- Diarrhoea,
- Eye and skin sores,
- And the loss of appetite.

Low zinc also affects the body's ability to heal wounds properly, taste food, alertness, delayed sexual development, and impotence in men.





# What foods are best for zinc?

Red meat, poultry, and eggs deliver the majority of zinc in the western diet. Yet, seafood like sardines, oysters, crab, and lobster contain good sources of zinc, with oysters having more zinc per serving than all food available.

But not all zinc comes from animal and sea-based foods. A wide variety of foods contain good sources of zinc, including beans, nuts, whole grains, like:

- Chickpeas, lentils, black beans, kidney beans, etc.
- Pumpkin seeds, cashews, hemp seeds, etc.
- Oats, quinoa, brown rice, etc.

However, phytates — antioxidant compounds — in whole-grain bread, cereals, legumes, and other plant foods, bind to zinc and inhibit absorption. That means the bioavailability of zinc from grains and plant-based foods is lower than in animal-based foods.

**Quick Tip:** *To reduce zinc binding by phytates and increase bioavailability, soak beans, grains, and seeds in water for several hours. Then rinse and leave sitting until sprouts have formed.*



## The upshot

Zinc is a vital nutrient required for growth, immune function, wound healing, and DNA synthesis. Maintain a varied diet rich in whole foods to boost immune health, reduce your risk of age-related diseases, and speed-up wound healing.

# Reference & further reading

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