Zinc

WHAT IS IT?

Zinc is an essential mineral necessary for many body functions, especially for gene expression, wound healing, and proper functioning of the immune system.

Zinc is found in many foods, especially nuts, beans, beef, and chicken. Oysters are very high in zinc. In the US, most cereals are fortified with zinc.

WHO MIGHT CONSIDER TAKING THIS?

Most of us can get the zinc we need from eating a healthy diet. People at risk for deficiency include vegetarians, the elderly, pregnant people, people with diabetes or alcoholism, and those taking certain medication (particularly diuretics).

Studies suggest that zinc lozenges help speed recovery from the common cold and reduce its symptoms if taken within 24 hours of coming down with a cold. Zinc is also an ingredient of oral supplements developed to help slow the progression of macular degeneration. Use with a clinicians' recommendation.

Zinc, used alone or in addition to other medications, may also be helpful for the treatment of acne.

If tissue levels are low in zinc, wounds may heal more slowly.

PREPARATIONS AND DOSAGE

Zinc comes in many forms, but the body can most readily use zinc glycinate, gluconate, and citrate forms. The RDA for adults is 8–11 mg per day.

CONCERNS?

There are very few concerns with taking zinc as a supplement orally when staying within recommended doses. High doses may cause abdominal pain, nausea, diarrhea, loss of appetite, and frequent infections. Intranasal zinc should never be used due to the possibility of irreversible loss of smell (anosmia).

The safe upper limit for adults has been set at 40 mg per day, though short-term usage of higher doses to fight off a cold is not problematic. Prolonged use of doses higher than 40 mg can cause copper and/or iron deficiencies and for this reason, many zinc supplements also contain copper in a 8 zinc: 1 copper ratio.

Notes:

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