

What You Need to Know about Zinc and Immunity

**** Dietitian support during COVID-19****

[Advice for the general public on COVID-19 nutrition](#)

Many dietitians offer services virtually and they are covered by most employee health benefit plans. [Find a dietitian here.](#)

Zinc is a mineral that your body needs to be healthy. Zinc supports your immune system and helps in normal growth and development at all ages. Read on to learn more about which foods have zinc and how much you need.

How much zinc do I need?

The amount of zinc you need depends on your age, sex and life stage. The table below shows you how much you need:

Age

Zinc

Amount needed per day

Men 19 and older

11 mg

Women 19 and older

8 mg

Pregnant women 19 and older 11 mg

Breastfeeding women 19 and older 12 mg

Which foods have zinc?

Although zinc comes from a variety of different foods, the best sources are high protein foods like seafood, meat, beans and [lentils](#). Some dairy products also have zinc. If you are eating a variety of foods based on [Canada's Food Guide](#), you will likely get the zinc you need.

The table below shows foods that contain zinc:

Food	Serving Size	Zinc (mg)
Oysters (Eastern, Pacific, wild and farmed)	75 g (2 ½ oz)	25-59
Beef	75 g (2 ½ oz)	4 to 9
Wheat germ cereal	30 mL (2 Tbsp)	2
Pork	75 g (2 ½ oz)	2 to 4
Heart of palm, raw	2 hearts (66 g)	2
Cheese (cheddar, swiss, gouda, brie, mozzarella)	50 g (1 ½ oz)	1 to 2
Ricotta cheese	125 mL (1/2 cup)	2
Yogurt	175 mL (3/4 cup)	1

Turkey	75g (2 ½ oz)	1-3
Baked beans, canned	175 mL (3/4 cup)	4
Lentils, canned	175 mL (3/4 cup)	2

Do I need to take a zinc supplement?

No. You do not need to take a zinc supplement if you are eating a variety of foods and you have no health conditions.

Here are some of the reasons why you may need a zinc supplement:

- You are recovering from surgery on your digestive system.

- You have a disease like Ulcerative Colitis, Crohn's, or chronic liver disease.

- You are a vegetarian and not eating a variety of plant based protein sources with zinc.

Before taking zinc supplements, it is best to speak with your healthcare provider. Zinc can be harmful if you take too much. At any age, it is important to have no more than 40 mg of zinc per day from foods and supplements.

Can zinc supplements prevent colds?

Research has shown that if you take zinc acetate supplements (often found in cold lozenges) while you have a cold, they may reduce symptoms and how long the cold lasts.

Meal and snack ideas to include more zinc in your diet

Try the tips below to get more zinc in your diet.

- Lean beef is a tasty protein option. Try this [vermicelli beef and broccoli pasta](#).

Ricotta cheese and yogurt are sources of zinc and make excellent snacks. Spread ricotta on whole wheat crackers or add sliced fruit to your favourite yogurt.

Purée [beans](#) or lentils with a little water and add it to hamburger mixtures, casseroles, soups, stews or pasta sauces.

Add some spice to your turkey dish by trying this [Thai Curry Turkey](#).

Try these other nutritious recipes that are rich in zinc:

[Banana Whole Grain Griddle Cakes](#)

[Black Bean Couscous Salad](#)

And try these recipes from Cookspiration:

[Baked eggs with lentils, peppers and tomatoes](#)

[Beef and lentil burgers](#)

[Savoury Broccoli and Cheese Muffins](#)