

Nutrition



TOP 5

Nutrients for Golfers

Golfers spend a lot of time and money on the right equipment to perfect their game. However, many golfers often ignore the right fuel and nutrients to maximize their concentration and focus. In Western societies, vitamin deficiency diseases such as scurvy and beriberi are uncommon. However, not getting enough of certain vitamins and minerals can be a risk factor for chronic diseases and can impair athletic performance.

According to surveys conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), most people do not meet the Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDAs) for many essential vitamins and minerals. The most common nutrient deficiencies include:

- Vitamin A
- Vitamin E
- Vitamin B6
- Calcium
- Magnesium
- Iron (especially for women)
- Zinc
- Vitamin D
- Folic Acid

In addition to those deficiencies, studies show that many of us are not getting enough fiber and essential fatty acids like the omega-3 fats. As a society, we are not malnourished, yet we are still not meeting our nutrient needs.

Why are we deficient?

The cause of our deficiencies can be summed up with a few reasons:

1. **Poor diet.** How can you meet your calorie needs without meeting your vitamin and mineral needs? Quite easily if the majority of your diet is high calorie foods without much nutritional value. Numerous studies have shown that Americans are getting too many calories and we are getting heavier as a nation. Even though we are getting an excess of calories, we are still nutrient deficient. Foods that are highly processed lose much of their nutritional value.
2. **Soil quality.** Researchers have found that the actual nutrient content of many of our grains, fruits, and vegetables are not as high as they once were. Reusing soil without allowing proper nutrient cycling is a big problem. The result is nutrient poor crops.
3. **Medical conditions.** If you have any problems with absorption such as irritable bowel syndrome, Crohn's disease, or other gastrointestinal problems, you may not be absorbing your vitamins and minerals properly. Also, if you have had certain surgeries such as gastric bypass or surgery to remove part of a diseased stomach or colon, you are likely not absorbing nutrients very well.
4. **Age.** As you age, you tend to eat less food. Less food means fewer nutrients. In addition, our ability to absorb nutrients properly declines as we age.

Why are we deficient?

Calcium

Why you need it

- Helps build and maintain strong bones
- Helps muscles contract for a proper swing
- Important role in keeping the heart beating when anticipating an important put
- Plays a role in nerve function

Where you can find it

- Milk
- Cheese
- Yogurt
- Calcium fortified foods (read labels for calcium in orange juice, soy milk, cereals, nutritional bars, bread, etc.)
- Tofu made with calcium sulfate
- Certain green leafy vegetables (kale, broccoli, bok choy)

Special Considerations

- Dairy foods supply about 72% of all the calcium available in the US food supply.
- Vitamin D is necessary for calcium to build and maintain good bone structure
- High doses (more than 2,500 per day) may affect absorption of iron, magnesium, and zinc and may lead to kidney stone formation
- Oxalates (found in vegetables) and phytates (found in grains) bind with calcium partially blocking their absorption
- Caffeine also slightly interferes with calcium absorption

Iron

Why you need it

- Is part of hemoglobin, the part of the blood that carries oxygen from your lungs to your cells
- Keeps immune system strong to help fight infections
- Prevents anemia, a major cause of fatigue

Where you can find it

- Meats such as liver, beef, chicken, pork
- Fortified cereals and breads
- Pumpkin seeds
- Soybean
- Spinach
- Legumes (kidney beans, black beans, pinto beans, lentils, chickpeas, etc)

Special considerations

- Iron deficiency is the most common nutrient deficiency, especially in women
- Women who are menstruating have higher iron needs, and iron needs decline once she starts menopause
- Iron from animal sources is called heme iron. About 15-35% of heme iron is absorbed
- Iron from plant sources is called nonheme iron. Only 2-20% of nonheme iron is absorbed
- Vitamin C-rich foods (oranges, tomatoes, potatoes, berries, peppers) help the body absorb iron better

- Eating foods high in heme and nonheme iron together also helps absorption. For example, eat a spinach salad with a sirloin

Potassium

Why you need it

- Helps fluid balance in cells of body
- Helps maintain proper blood pressure to keep you cool under pressure
- Helps transmit nerve signals
- Helps muscles contract

Where you can find it

- All fruits (bananas, plums, peaches, apricots, oranges, pears, etc.)
- Potatoes
- Milk
- Legumes
- Tomatoes
- Almonds
- Sports drinks

Special Considerations

- If you are prone to cramping, make sure you are eating plenty of potassium rich foods. Bring a banana on the course with you.
- You may need a potassium supplement if you are taking blood pressure medication. Check with your doctor.
- While sports beverages do contain some potassium, eating a piece of fresh fruit will also provide carbs and potassium to keep you fueled on the course.

Omega-3 fatty acids

Why you need them

- Help reduce inflammation in sore muscles
- Help to thin the blood and prevent clotting and clogging in arteries
- May reduce blood pressure and triglyceride levels

Where you can find them

- Fatty fish like salmon, sardines, herring, swordfish, tuna
- Flaxseeds
- Canola oil
- Walnuts

Special considerations

- Three major types of omega-3s exist. EPA and DHA are predominantly found in fish. ALA is found in flax, canola, and walnuts.
- EPA/DHA has been found to be more beneficial for heart health and in reducing inflammation.
- The American Heart Association recommends that everyone have at least 2 servings of fatty fish per week. They also recommend that anyone with heart disease take 1000 mg (1 g) of DHA/EPA omega-3 daily.
- If you do not eat fish, consider taking a fish oil omega-3 supplement, but check with your doctor first.

B-Vitamins

(folic acid, thiamin, niacin, riboflavin, B6, B12, biotin, pantothenic acid)

Why you need them

- Important to produce energy in all cells of the body to keep you focused
- Helps the body use sugars and fatty acids to give you energy to play
- Plays vital role in making new cells so you can recover from each game

Where you can find them

- Fortified breakfast cereals and other grain products
- Meats
- Eggs
- Vegetables
- Legumes
- Milk and Yogurt

Special considerations

- Getting enough B-vitamins is important for energy production. However, having more will not necessarily give you more energy.
- Your body will excrete extra B-vitamins, but it is a good idea not to take mega-doses. High levels of some B-vitamins in supplement form have been

linked to nerve damage.

Do you need a supplement?

If you are eating a healthy, well-balanced diet, experts say you do not need a supplement. “The bottom line is if you can get the nutrients from your diet, then eat them. Eating your nutrients is much better than a supplement,” says Jim White, RD, a sports dietitian and owner of Jim White Fitness Studios. He recommends taking a supplement if you are not able to eat the desired number of servings from each food group daily.

Daily Diet Guidelines*

Grain:	6-10 ounces
Fruits:	1.5-3 cups
Vegetables:	2-4 cups
Dairy:	2-4 cups
Protein:	5-10 ounces

*These numbers vary based on your age, height, weight, gender, and physical activity. Go to the “My Pyramid Plan” section of www.mypyramid.gov to get a more accurate picture for you.

If you don't eat nutrient-rich foods daily, you may benefit from a dietary supplement. Just remember that the supplement is just that—a supplement to your diet. Fill your plate with nutritious food and take vitamins, minerals; omega-3's to fill in any gaps that exist in your diet.