

Warning Signs You are Deficient in Zinc, and What to Eat to Get it

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Are your wounds slow to heal? Is your immunity impaired? Are you more frequently stricken by colds and flu? Are you also more prone to other types of infections? Do you have poor sexual health? Are your senses of taste and smell somewhat impaired? If so, you could be suffering from a zinc deficiency.

Zinc is an essential mineral with many important functions in the human body. Some of its more important roles in human health are its contributions to immune function, wound healing, skin health, sexual health and sensory functions.

Zinc is found in every cell in the human body and is a part of over 200 enzymes. This mineral is also needed for the proper action of many bodily hormones, including growth hormone, sex hormones, thymic hormones and insulin. Zinc is needed for protein synthesis and cell growth, and it helps fight free radical formation in the body. It even plays a part in chemical detoxification. Zinc has anti-inflammatory properties, especially in the joints and artery linings.

Deficiency symptoms

Other possible warning signs and symptoms of zinc deficiency:

- growth retardation
- fatigue
- poor appetite
- malabsorption
- sleep issues
- behavioral and psychiatric issues
- oversensitivity to environmental toxins
- poor vision at night or with low lighting
- skin lesions and skin issues, including eczema, psoriasis and acne
- white spots on the fingernails; the nails could be thin and could peel
- impaired senses of smell and taste
- hair loss
- poor memory
- inflammatory bowel disease
- connective tissue disease
- rheumatoid arthritis
- white coating on the tongue

- bad breath
- ulcers in the mouth
- poor glucose tolerance
- delayed sexual maturation
- infertility
- males could have low sperm count, reduced testosterone levels or impotence
- males could also have prostate issues or testicular atrophy
- females could have menstrual issues

Children who are deficient in zinc could suffer from poor appetite and slow development. Their attention spans and learning capabilities could also be negatively affected. Sexual development could be slowed, and they could suffer from acne in later years.

Young females who are deficient in zinc could experience delayed menstruation during their teens.

In addition, severe zinc deficiency could negatively affect one's skin, mental health and immune function, as well as cause diarrhea and hair loss. In very bad cases, total absence of sexual function and dwarfism could result.

Zinc-rich foods

One good way to boost the levels of zinc in one's body is to consume more zinc-rich foods.

Some animal-based foods with zinc include fish (e.g., herring and sardines), red meats (beef, lamb, pork), liver, oysters, poultry, shellfish and other seafood, with oysters being perhaps the most well-known one.

Dairy products and egg yolks also contain zinc, though absorption of zinc from these sources may be poorer.

Plant-based foods which contain zinc include whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds. However, generally speaking, zinc in plant-based foods are not as well absorbed by the body, as they tend to be bound to the fiber, phytates (found in grains and legumes) and oxalates (found in vegetables and grains), which they contain. Zinc in animal-based foods is bound with proteins and tend to be better absorbed. Even then, it is possible for people who consume a largely vegetarian diet to still get enough zinc.

Some plant-based foods which have good zinc content include almonds, Brazil nuts, buckwheat, ginger root, green peas, hazelnuts, kelp, lima beans, certain mushrooms, oats, peanuts, pecans, pumpkin seeds, rye, turnips, walnuts and whole wheat, though one should take care to avoid GMOs and be aware of the dangers of wheat gluten.

Sources for this article include:

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