

About Zinc and Zinc Deficiency

What does zinc do?

Zinc is a mineral in your body that is involved in hundreds of chemical reactions in the human body. Zinc is important for immune function, acid-base balance, digestion, growth and development, skin and hair health, genetic transcription, antioxidant activity and much more.

What happens if my zinc is low/if I don't get enough zinc?

Because zinc affects so many systems in the body, there is no single distinct symptom of zinc deficiency. Some of the more common symptoms include loss of or diminished smell and taste, poor wound healing, hair loss, roughening of skin/rashes, low libido (men), canker sores, lethargy, and deformed nails.

If symptoms progress, there can be serious immune problems, severe diarrhea, severe hair loss (even total), loss of night vision, and significant rash around the mouth and genitals.

What are other symptoms?

Other Symptoms of zinc deficiency include:

- Infections – especially skin, respiratory, GI and urinary
- Metallic taste in mouth
- Lip fissures, cracked/peeling lips
- Anorexia, loss of appetite
- Prostate problems (men)
- Irregular menses (women)

Where can I get zinc?

Zinc is found in a wide variety of foods. Some of the best sources include shellfish, other seafood, meat, dairy products, legumes (beans, peas, lentils), nuts and seeds. Zinc is also found in most multivitamins and in a wide variety of dietary supplements. Zinc may be better absorbed if you take it with a protein-rich meal. If you know you have a significant problem with fat malabsorption, it may be better to take zinc on an empty stomach. If you are taking a separate zinc supplement for zinc deficiency, it is best to take it separately for calcium and iron supplements.

Other important things

Zinc can have toxicity and side effects when taken in high doses for a long period of time. Zinc can deplete copper in the body, so if you are taking supplemental zinc, you need to make sure you have adequate copper. High doses of zinc can also cause digestive and renal problems, so it is best to take high doses only when instructed to do so by your doctor and only for the recommended length of time. Be sure to ask your doctor about follow-up lab work.

If you need more information contact: Lucy Jones – Specialist Bariatric Dietitian 0207 288 5989