PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Magnesium in Your Diet

This information explains how to add the right amount of magnesium to your diet to stay healthy.

What is magnesium?

Magnesium is a mineral in the body that:

- Helps keep your heart rhythm steady
- Helps maintain normal muscle and nerve function
- Works with other minerals to maintain strong bones and teeth
- Helps keep you healthy

The best way to add magnesium to your diet is through different foods. You can also get magnesium as a supplement orally (by mouth) or intravenously (IV, through a vein).

Low levels of magnesium in the body can be caused by:

- Chronic (long-term) or excessive vomiting (throwing up) or diarrhea (loose or watery bowel movements)
- Having problems absorbing nutrients in the stomach or kidneys
- Not eating enough food with magnesium
- Taking some medicines, such as certain diuretics (medicines that help you urinate (pee)), antibiotics, thyroid medicines, proton pump inhibitors, or chemotherapies. These medicines can increase the loss of magnesium through urine (pee).

How much magnesium do I need every day?

If your magnesium level is low, your doctor, nurse practitioner (NP), or physician assistant (PA) may give you a prescription for a magnesium supplement to take by mouth or you may be given it through an IV.

The table below from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) shows the daily recommended amounts of magnesium for children and adults.

Age (years)	Males (mg/day)	Females (mg/day)	Pregnant Females (mg/day)	Lactating Females (mg/day)
1 to 3	80	80	N/A*	N/A
4 to 8	130	130	N/A	N/A
9 to 13	240	240	N/A	N/A
14 to 18	410	360	400	360
19 to 30	400	310	350	310
31 to 50	420	320	360	320
51 or older	420	320	N/A	N/A

What are food sources of magnesium?

Eating foods with magnesium can help increase the amount in your body. Eating a variety of whole grains, legumes (such as peas and beans), and dark green, leafy vegetables every day will help you get your daily recommended amount of magnesium. You can also get magnesium from drinking water. Water, including tap, mineral, or bottled, can have up to 120 mg of magnesium, depending on the brand of water and where it came from. The table below lists foods and the amount of magnesium in each one.

Food	Serving Size	Amount of Magnesium (mg)	DV** (%)
Almonds (dry roasted)	1 ounce	80	19
Spinach (boiled)	½ cup	78	19

Cashews (dry roasted)	1 ounce	74	18
Peanuts (oil roasted)	¼ cup	63	15
Black beans (cooked)	½ cup	60	14
Soybeans (shelled, cooked)	½ cup	50	12
Bread, whole wheat	2 slices	46	10
Avocado, cubed	1 cup	44	10
Potato (baked with skin)	3.5 ounces	43	10
Yogurt, plain, low fat	8 ounces	42	10
Brown rice (long-grain, cooked)	½ cup	42	10
Breakfast cereals (fortified with 10% of the DV for magnesium)	1 serving	42	10
Oatmeal (instant)	1 packet	36	9
Kidney beans (canned)	½ cup	35	8
Banana	1 medium	32	8
Milk	1 cup	27	6
Salmon (Atlantic, farmed, cooked)	3 ounces	26	6
Halibut (cooked)	3 ounces	24	6
Raisins	½ cup	23	5
Chicken breast (roasted)	3 ounces	22	5
Beef (ground, 90% lean, pan broiled)	3 ounces	20	5
Broccoli (chopped, cooked)	½ cup	12	3
Rice (white, cooked)	½ cup	10	2
Apple	1 medium	9	2

Carrot (raw)	1 medium	7	2

*N/A=Not Applicable

**DV=Daily Value. A DV is a percentage of the total daily recommended amount. A food that provides 20% of the DV per serving is high in magnesium.

How can I speak with a dietitian?

If you have any questions or concerns about your diet while you're in the hospital, ask to see a dietitian. You can also call 212-639-7312 to speak to or schedule an appointment with a dietitian.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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