

Magnesium: Magic Mineral for Better Sleep, Mood, and More

By Lynn Allison

Our great-grandparents got 500 milligrams of magnesium a day from their diet. Today, our soil has been so depleted of this crucial mineral that the amount we normally get from food has been diminished to less than 200 mg per day. And the magnesium we do get is offset by eating sugar, a stress-filled life, excessive exercise, medications, and caffeine.

Dr. Daryl Gioffre, a board-certified nutritionist and author of “Get Off Your Acid,” tells *Health Radar* that magnesium is the most important mineral in terms of day-to-day function, and yet half of us are deficient. Magnesium deficiency is most often caused by lifestyle factors, including a diet high in processed foods, alcohol abuse, and Type 2 diabetes.

Dr. David Friedman, the best-selling author of “Food Sanity: How to Eat in a World of Fads and Fiction,” explains that magnesium plays a vital role in converting food into energy, as well as protein synthesis, regulating the nervous system, and repairing DNA. “Without magnesium, our muscles and nerves couldn’t function, our brain wouldn’t work, and our bones would turn to Jell-O,” he says.

Foods richest in magnesium include red bell peppers, spinach, watercress, dark chocolate, and cucumbers. Gioffre says everyone needs between 500 mg and 600 mg of magnesium daily. Because we get only 200 mg from foods, most of us need to supplement

with 300-450 mg of magnesium glycinate or magnesium citrate, forms of magnesium that are easily absorbed by the body.

The health benefits of magnesium are wide-ranging and crucial for every function in our body. Here are some of the things magnesium can do for you:

Improves sleep. Friedman notes that 160 million Americans have trouble sleeping, and it could be the result of magnesium deficiency. “This mineral has been used successfully to help people get deep, restorative sleep,” he says.

Beats depression. Ninety million Americans suffer from mild anxiety and depression, with 17.3 million experiencing a major depressive episode annually. “Research shows that magnesium lowers the risk of depression by 22 percent,” says Friedman, adding that the mineral activates the parasympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for calming you down and helping you relax.

Helps stabilize diabetes. Magnesium is crucial for insulin production. It works alongside potassium to help regulate blood sugar levels. “If you’ve been craving too much sugar lately, it may be that your magnesium levels are drained,” says Gioffre.

Relaxes muscles. People who suffer from muscle cramps may be deficient in magnesium. “This includes the muscles in your digestive tract and arterial walls,” explains Gioffre. “So magnesium is important for digestive and heart health.” It also stabilizes blood

pressure and helps the nervous system to relax, which allows enzymes to help the body heal, thus slowing the aging process.

Protects the brain. “In the brain, magnesium affects learning, memory and mood along with other factors,” says Gioffre. Supplementing with magnesium has been shown to reduce the number of brain plaques in mice with Alzheimer’s disease, and dramatically increase long-term spatial memory in rats while improving overall brain function.

Helps headaches. Research has shown that people who suffer from migraines usually have low levels of magnesium. A 1996 study found that migraine sufferers who took a magnesium supplement every day for 12 weeks reduced their incidences of migraines by 41 percent.

Improves workouts. A 2017 study found that magnesium enhances athletic performance by making sure muscles are well supplied with glucose for energy. Studies have also shown that the more active you are, the more your body needs magnesium. The mineral may also prevent muscle cramping.

Enhances vitamin D absorption. We are becoming more aware of the significance of vitamin D in preventing illness, but even with adequate exposure to the sun or supplementation, if your body is deficient in magnesium it can make the vitamin D ineffective, according to the American Osteopathic Association. □