

Evidence-based Women's Health Vitamins and Supplements

recommendations on the latest vitamins and supplements

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IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

Always consult your healthcare provider before starting any new supplement. Supplements can interact with medications, affect medical conditions, and may not be safe during pregnancy or breastfeeding.

This information is for educational purposes only and does not replace medical advice.

About This Guide

This comprehensive guide covers vitamins and supplements commonly used for women's health conditions including PCOS, PMS, menstrual health, and general wellness. Each entry includes evidence-based information about benefits, dosing, timing, and safety considerations.

Choosing Quality Supplements

- Look for third-party testing: **USP**, **NSF International**, or **ConsumerLab** seals
- Check expiration dates and storage requirements
- Buy from reputable brands and retailers
- Be wary of supplements making extreme health claims
- Report adverse effects to your doctor and FDA MedWatch

When to Contact Your Healthcare Provider

- Before starting any new supplement, especially if you have medical conditions
- If you're pregnant, breastfeeding, or planning pregnancy
- If you experience side effects or unusual symptoms
- Before surgery (some supplements affect bleeding and anesthesia)
- If you're taking prescription medications
- To check blood levels (Vitamin D, B12, Iron, etc.) before supplementing

Remember: Supplements are meant to complement, not replace, a healthy diet and lifestyle. Work with your healthcare team to create a personalized plan that's safe and effective for your individual needs.

Vitamin & Supplement Information:

Calcium

What it does:

Calcium is the main building block of your bones and teeth. Your body also uses calcium to help your muscles move, your nerves send messages, and your heart beat regularly. When you don't get enough calcium, your body takes it from your bones, which can make them weaker over time.

How it can help:

- Builds and protects strong bones, especially important during the teen years and after menopause
- May help reduce PMS symptoms like mood changes, bloating, cramps, and food cravings

Dosage & Timing:

Teens (ages 9-18): 1,300 mg per day from food and supplements combined. **Adults (ages 19-50): 1,000 mg per day.** **Women over 50: 1,200 mg per day.** **For PMS: 1,000-1,200 mg per day.** Split into two doses (morning and evening) - your body can only absorb about 500 mg at a time. Take with food for best absorption.

Safety Notes:

Do NOT take at the same time as iron supplements - calcium blocks iron absorption. Separate by at least 2 hours. Too much calcium (over 2,500 mg/day) can cause kidney stones and constipation. If you take **thyroid medication**, **blood pressure pills**, or certain **antibiotics**, take calcium at a different time.

Vitamin D

What it does:

Vitamin D helps your body absorb calcium from food. Without enough vitamin D, calcium can't do its job. Vitamin D also supports your immune system, muscles, and mood. Your skin makes vitamin D from sunlight, but many people don't get enough this way.

How it can help:

- Works with calcium to keep bones strong
- May help with period regularity and reduce PMS symptoms
- Important for women with **PCOS** - low vitamin D is very common in PCOS

Dosage & Timing:

Teens and adults: 600 IU per day (basic recommended amount). **Adults over 70: 800 IU per day.** Many doctors recommend **1,000-2,000 IU per day**, especially if your levels are low. Do NOT take more than 4,000 IU per day without your doctor's guidance. Take with a meal that contains some fat - vitamin D is fat-soluble.

Safety Notes:

Very high doses (over 10,000 IU/day) can be toxic. If you take **steroids**, **seizure medicines**, or **weight-loss drugs**, they can affect your vitamin D levels. Your doctor can check your vitamin D level with a simple blood test.

Magnesium

What it does:

Magnesium is a relaxation mineral that helps muscles, nerves, and energy production work properly. It is often used to support sleep, ease muscle tension, and calm cramping.

How it can help:

- May help reduce menstrual cramps and muscle tightness
- Can support better sleep and relaxation in the evening
- May be helpful for headaches or tension related to hormone changes

Dosage & Timing:

300-400 mg daily - evening use is often preferred because it may support calm and sleep.

Safety Notes:

Magnesium may cause digestive upset, especially at higher doses. Starting low and increasing gradually can improve tolerance.

Iron

What it does:

Iron is needed to make healthy red blood cells that carry oxygen throughout the body. It is especially important for people with heavy periods or low iron stores.

How it can help:

- Helps prevent or treat iron deficiency and anemia
- May improve fatigue, weakness, and low stamina caused by low iron
- Supports healthy blood production during heavy menstrual bleeding

Dosage & Timing:

18-27 mg daily - take on an empty stomach if tolerated; if it causes nausea, take with a small amount of food.

Safety Notes:

Iron commonly causes **constipation** and nausea. Keep it separate from **calcium**, **tea**, and certain **medications** to improve absorption.

Vitamin B6

What it does:

Vitamin B6 helps the body make neurotransmitters involved in mood, energy, and sleep. It is also used to support hormone-related symptoms such as PMS and nausea.

How it can help:

- May help reduce PMS mood changes and irritability

- Can support nausea relief in some people
- Helps the body process protein and support nerve function

Dosage & Timing:

50-100 mg daily - often taken in the morning with food.

Safety Notes:

High doses over 200 mg can cause nerve damage over time, so avoid taking more than needed.

Vitamin B12

What it does:

Vitamin B12 supports nerve function, red blood cell production, and energy metabolism. It is especially important for vegetarians, vegans, and people who take certain medications such as metformin.

How it can help:

- Supports healthy energy levels and may help reduce fatigue
- Helps maintain nerve health and normal brain function
- Important for red blood cell formation and prevention of deficiency

Dosage & Timing:

500-1000 mcg daily - usually taken in the morning.

Safety Notes:

Vitamin B12 is generally very safe. People following vegetarian diets or taking **metformin** may need it more often.

Folate

What it does:

Folate supports cell growth, DNA production, and healthy red blood cell formation. It is especially important before and during pregnancy because it helps prevent neural tube defects.

How it can help:

- Essential for healthy pregnancy planning and fetal development
- Supports cell repair and growth throughout the body
- May help with low folate-related fatigue or mood concerns

Dosage & Timing:

400-800 mcg daily - can be taken anytime, with or without food.

Safety Notes:

Methylfolate may be a better option for people with **MTHFR variants**. Folate is especially important before pregnancy and early in pregnancy.

Omega-3 Fish Oil

What it does:

Omega-3 fish oil provides EPA and DHA, two important fatty acids that help lower inflammation. It is commonly used to support heart health, hormone balance, and menstrual comfort.

How it can help:

- May help reduce inflammation associated with **PCOS** and period discomfort
- Supports heart and brain health
- May help with menstrual pain and general hormone-related inflammation

Dosage & Timing:

1000-2000 mg EPA+DHA daily - take with meals to reduce fishy aftertaste and improve absorption.

Safety Notes:

Omega-3 Fish Oil may increase **bleeding risk**, especially at higher doses or before surgery. Choose quality-tested brands to reduce contamination concerns.

Inositol

What it does:

Inositol is a sugar-like compound that supports insulin signaling and ovarian function. It is commonly used in **PCOS** care because it may help improve ovulation and metabolic balance.

How it can help:

- May support insulin sensitivity and blood sugar balance
- Can help promote more regular ovulation in some people with **PCOS**
- Generally well tolerated and easy to add to a routine

Dosage & Timing:

2000-4000 mg daily - often split into 2 doses for consistency.

Safety Notes:

Inositol is usually well tolerated, though some people notice mild digestive upset when starting it.

NAC

What it does:

NAC, or N-Acetyl Cysteine, is an antioxidant that helps the body produce glutathione, one of its main protective compounds. It is often used to support fertility and metabolic health in **PCOS**.

How it can help:

- May support antioxidant protection and cell health
- Can be used as part of a fertility-supportive routine
- May help some people with **PCOS** and inflammation-related concerns

Dosage & Timing:

600-1800 mg daily - often taken on an empty stomach for best absorption.

Safety Notes:

NAC may interact with **blood thinners** and **nitroglycerin**. Use caution if you take prescription medications.

Vitamin E

What it does:

Vitamin E is an antioxidant that helps protect cells from damage. It is sometimes used to support menstrual comfort and PMS symptom relief.

How it can help:

- May help reduce menstrual pain and cramping for some people
- Supports antioxidant protection in the body
- Can be part of a broader strategy for hormone-related symptoms

Dosage & Timing:

400 IU daily - take with food to improve absorption.

Safety Notes:

Vitamin E in high doses can increase **bleeding risk**. Avoid taking more than needed, especially if you use other blood-thinning supplements or medicines.

Zinc

What it does:

Zinc is an essential mineral involved in immune function, skin health, wound healing, and hormone regulation. It is often included in routines for acne and reproductive health support.

How it can help:

- Supports immune health and tissue repair
- May help with **PCOS**-related skin concerns like acne
- Helps the body use enzymes needed for many metabolic functions

Dosage & Timing:

15-30 mg daily - take with food to reduce stomach upset.

Safety Notes:

Too much zinc can interfere with **copper absorption** and may cause nausea, so avoid excessive dosing.

Chromium

What it does:

Chromium is a trace mineral that helps insulin work properly. It is sometimes used to support blood sugar balance and cravings management.

How it can help:

- May help improve insulin sensitivity
- Can support steadier blood sugar levels
- May be useful for people who notice energy dips between meals

Dosage & Timing:

200-1000 mcg daily - take with meals.

Safety Notes:

Chromium is generally well tolerated, but it may enhance **insulin effects** in some people.

Spearmint Tea

What it does:

Spearmint tea is a gentle herbal option often used in **PCOS** routines. It is valued for its potential hormone-balancing and calming properties.

How it can help:

- May help reduce excess androgen-related symptoms
- Can support a soothing daily wellness routine
- A simple, non-pill option for consistent use

Dosage & Timing:

2 cups daily - can be enjoyed morning or evening.

Safety Notes:

Spearmint tea is generally very safe, but results often take **1-3 months** of consistent use to notice.

Chasteberry (Vitex)

What it does:

Chasteberry, also called Vitex, is an herbal supplement commonly used to support menstrual cycle regularity and PMS comfort. It is often taken over time rather than for immediate effects.

How it can help:

- May help support more regular cycles
- Can reduce some PMS-related symptoms in certain people
- Often used as part of a longer-term hormone support plan

Dosage & Timing:

400 mg daily - morning use is often preferred.

Safety Notes:

Chasteberry can interact with **hormonal medications**, **dopamine-related drugs**, and **birth control**. Use caution if you take prescription medicines.

Vitamin K2

What it does:

Vitamin K2 helps direct calcium into your bones and teeth and keeps it out of your blood vessels. Think of it as a traffic director for calcium.

How it can help:

- Works with calcium and vitamin D to support bone health

- May be especially helpful during perimenopause and menopause

Dosage & Timing:

90-180 mcg per day (MK-7 form is well studied). Take with a meal containing fat (it is fat-soluble).

Safety Notes:

If you take **blood thinners** (especially warfarin/Coumadin), do NOT take without your doctor's approval.

Coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10)

What it does:

CoQ10 helps your cells produce energy inside the mitochondria - the "power plants" of your cells. It is also a powerful antioxidant. Your body makes less CoQ10 as you age.

How it can help:

- In **PCOS**: May improve insulin resistance, lower blood sugar, reduce testosterone, and improve cholesterol
- For fertility: May improve egg quality, especially in women over 35
- Supports heart health and energy levels

Dosage & Timing:

For PCOS: 100-200 mg per day. For fertility: 200-600 mg per day. For general health: 100-200 mg per day. Take with a meal containing fat - CoQ10 absorbs much better with food. "Ubiquinol" form may be better absorbed than "ubiquinone."

Safety Notes:

Very well tolerated - mild nausea or diarrhea possible. May reduce warfarin's effectiveness - talk to your doctor if on **blood thinners**. May lower blood pressure and blood sugar slightly - monitor if on related medications.

Creatine

What it does:

Creatine is a natural substance in your muscles and brain that helps cells make quick energy, especially during exercise. You also get it from red meat and fish.

How it can help:

- Combined with resistance training, may help build and maintain lean muscle and strength - especially important during and after menopause
- May help maintain bone strength at the hip in postmenopausal women who exercise
- Early research suggests it may help with mood and depression in women

Dosage & Timing:

3-5 g per day of creatine monohydrate (the most studied form). No loading phase needed - just take a consistent daily dose. Must be combined with resistance training for muscle and bone benefits. Any time of day - consistency matters more than timing. Mix powder in water, juice, or a smoothie.

Safety Notes:

Very safe - extensively studied for decades. Does NOT harm kidneys in healthy people (common myth). But talk to your doctor if you have kidney disease. May cause mild water retention in the first week or two. Creatine without exercise does NOT improve muscle or bone - you need to pair it with resistance training.

Ginger

What it does:

Ginger contains compounds called gingerols and shogaols that reduce inflammation and pain. It blocks prostaglandins - the same chemicals that cause menstrual cramps and that ibuprofen targets.

How it can help:

- May reduce menstrual cramp pain - studies show it works about as well as ibuprofen
- Well-known for reducing nausea, including morning sickness in pregnancy

Dosage & Timing:

For period pain: 750-2,000 mg per day, divided into 2-3 doses, during the first 3-4 days of your period. **For nausea: 250 mg four times per day.** Start at the beginning of your period. Take with food to reduce stomach irritation.

⚠ Safety Notes:

Very safe at recommended doses. May cause mild heartburn or stomach upset. May have mild blood-thinning effects - talk to your doctor if on blood thinners. Safe during pregnancy at doses up to 1 g/day for nausea, but talk to your provider first.

When to Take Your Supplements

Take in the Morning:

- **Vitamin D, B vitamins, Iron** (if tolerated on empty stomach)
- **Chasteberry/Vitex**

Take with Food:

- **Omega-3 fish oil, Vitamin E, Calcium, Zinc, Chromium**
- **Iron** (if empty stomach causes upset)

Take in the Evening:

- **Magnesium** (helps with sleep)
- **Inositol** (second dose if splitting)

⚠ Keep Separate (2+ hours apart):

- **Calcium and Iron** - compete for absorption
 - **Calcium and Thyroid medication** - calcium blocks absorption
 - **Iron and Antibiotics** - can reduce effectiveness
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