The Magnesium Diet

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A quality diet is the foundation for good health and what it boils down to is a healthy balance of nutrients. The human body requires a balance of protein, carbohydrates, and fat, as well as essential vitamins and minerals to sustain essential bodily processes.

If your nutrition is not properly balanced, your body is not going to function as well as it should, and systems are going to break down. Though your body needs a variety of different nutrients, magnesium is one of the most important – without it there can be no life. Alongside magnesium is calcium, another essential nutrient.

The magnesium diet focuses primarily on magnesium, but will also touch on calcium and other nutrients your body needs to function as it should. The modern American diet is neither a good example of balance nor health. It is very carbohydrate-heavy and overloaded with refined flours and sugars, processed foods, and fatty foods.

In fact, it has been said that as much as 25% of the average American diet is comprised of “non-foods” – that is, foods that do not provide any nutritional value. Many of the foods that do contain nutrients have been fortified or enriched using synthetic vitamins and minerals to replace nutrients that were lost during processing.

Magnesium is one of the minerals that is frequently destroyed during processing and, in many cases, it is not replaced. George Eby, author of *The Magnesium Miracle*, understands first-hand the dangers of a diet deficient in magnesium. Having suffered from magnesium deficiency for several years, Eby is a firm believer that lack of magnesium in the average American diet could be to blame for as many as 50% to 70% of chronic illnesses.
This is due to the fact that many Americans are raised on a diet that is deficient in magnesium – a diet that has been followed for more than 100 years ago, ever since large-scale flour refinery became the standard.

It is Eby’s belief that white flour should not be called “refined” flour, but “depleted” flour because it has been robbed of essential nutrients during processing. In fact, an article published in the November 2002 issue of the *Harvard Heart Letter* showed that only 16% of the original magnesium content was retained during the refining of wheat.

While magnesium is the main mineral that Eby is concerned with, he also recognizes the importance of critical nutrients like Vitamin B6 and Vitamin E, both of which are essential for the proper absorption of magnesium by the body. These vitamins are also heavily depleted by the process of refinery.

Whereas Vitamins E and B6 can be found in a variety of other foods, magnesium is not quite so common.

This problem is magnified by the fact that the average American diet is filled with foods made from depleted wheat flour such as cakes, pastries, waffles, biscuits, bread, cookies, doughnuts, and more. Supply increases with demand, and the demand for these unhealthy “nonfoods” continues to rise.

The recommended daily dose of magnesium for the average American adult aged 19 to 50 years is between 320mg and 420mg. Young adults aged 19 to 30 should be receiving 310mg of magnesium in their diet for females and 400mg for males. Females aged 31 to 50 should be getting 320mg of magnesium from their daily diet and males in the same age range require about 420 mg.

These needs remain the same for females and males over the age of 51, respectively. In order to reach these daily recommendations, you can increase your consumption of magnesium-rich foods, take synthetic magnesium supplements, or do a combination of both.
Magnesium can be found in natural food sources like leafy green vegetables, legumes, nuts, seeds, and whole grains. In many cases, foods that are rich in dietary fiber also contain magnesium, though there are always exceptions to the rule. It is also important to realize that some foods are richer in magnesium than others.

For example, a single ounce of almonds contains 80mg of magnesium, or about 20% of your daily requirement. Comparatively, potato chips contain about 15mg of magnesium per ounce – you need 26 ounces of potato chips to reach your daily dose of magnesium.

To give you a picture of the nutrient deficiency of most refined foods, here is a list of foods that contain magnesium – they are arranged in ascending order based on the number of ounces required to reach a daily dose of 400mg magnesium:

- Wheat bran – 2.3oz
- Cocoa powder – 2.65oz
- Peanut butter – 3.9oz
- Kellogg’s All Bran – 3.9oz
- Old-fashioned oats – 5.1oz
- Molasses – 5.3oz
- Buckwheat flour – 5.65oz
- Wheat germ – 5.9oz
- Peanuts – 8oz
- Tortilla chips – 14.5oz
- Dinner rolls – 16.6oz
- Whole-wheat bread – 17.3oz
- English muffins – 20oz
- Potatoes – 21.7oz
- Pasta – 22oz
- Crackers – 22.75oz
- White bread – 25oz
- Potato chips – 26oz
- Doughnuts – 54.25oz

As you can see, many of these refined foods are very low in magnesium. In many cases, it takes much more than a single serving to achieve the recommended daily dosage.
Dietary Solutions for Magnesium Deficiency

Although the average American diet is highly deficient in magnesium, it is easier than you might think to address this deficiency. Consider the findings the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) made, showing that the average American woman gets about 25% of her daily magnesium dose from grain products.

If you refer back to the list provided in the last section, you will see that refined grain products like white bread and pasta are at the lower end of the magnesium spectrum, while wheat bran and oats are near the top of the list. You can glean from this the idea that whole grains are a better source of magnesium than refined grains.

Other natural foods that are rich in magnesium have already been mentioned – they include nuts, seeds, legumes, and leafy greens, among others. You can also find magnesium in protein-rich foods like meat, fish, and milk.

As a general rule, if you want to increase your magnesium consumption then you need to cut back on processed and refined foods and increase your intake of natural, wholesome foods.

This means structuring your diet around lean proteins, whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables, nuts and seeds, and healthy fats. In fact, French magnesium experts have confirmed that that a diet low in saturated fats and high in nutrient-rich foods is the key to promoting heart and blood health.

It is also safe to say that improving your diet will provide other general health benefits, such as regulated blood pressure and blood sugar levels, improved digestion, better cognitive performance, and improved energy levels.

The key is to pair a healthy, balanced diet with other healthy habits to maximize your total-body health and wellness, as well as your longevity.
What Role Does Calcium Play?

In the same way that magnesium supports healthy blood, nerves, and muscles, calcium supports healthy bones. Together, these nutrients support total body health and wellness.

Looking at the provided list of magnesium-rich foods, you may notice that many of these foods are also natural sources for calcium. Calcium can be found in leafy green vegetables, legumes, fruit, and most dairy products – it can also be found in seafood.

By eating these foods, you can increase your intake of both calcium and magnesium, which will have significant benefits for your overall health.

Keep in mind, however, that processing and cooking can sometimes deplete the nutrient content of whole foods. Magnesium is more highly affected by processing and cooking than calcium, however, so you may want to think about taking a magnesium supplement to make sure you get your daily dose.

Should You Switch to Organic Food?

If you are trying to increase your intake of magnesium, you should make an effort to eat more whole, unprocessed foods. When making this change to your diet, you may wonder whether it might also be a benefit to switch to organic foods while you are at it.

Studies have in fact shown that factory-farmed food tends to be lower in magnesium than more natural foods, so going organic may be a wise choice.

If you are thinking about making the switch, you may be concerned about the price of organic food. While it is certainly true that organic food costs more than regular food, organic food prices have been steadily declining.
As more and more people make the switch, organic food becomes more readily available and that drives down the price.

There are also plenty of options out there to help you save even more on organic food. Community-sponsored agriculture (CSA) and farm-share programs are a great way to get organic foods at an affordable price. These include not only fresh fruits and vegetables, but may include organic eggs and meat as well.

**Magnesium Salt Replacements**

While increasing your consumption of magnesium-rich foods is an important step in addressing magnesium deficiency, there is one thing that many people fail to consider – their salt usage. You probably already know that consuming too much salt is bad for heart health, but you may not know that there are different kinds of salt – some of them can even be good for your body!

Regular table salt is made from sodium chloride and it is the kind you should avoid because it is very high in sodium – it contains about 2,325mg per teaspoon. Sea salt, on the other hand, is very safe and it also contains a decent amount of magnesium. If you are looking for an option with lower sodium, however, consider something like Smart Salt, which comes from the Great Salt Lake in Utah. This salt contains just 532mg of sodium per teaspoon as well as 288mg of potassium and over 200mg of magnesium.

Another option is called Cardia Salt, which tastes the same as table salt, but is lower in sodium and higher in potassium and magnesium.

Since the average person uses about 3 teaspoons of salt per day, it is very important to choose an option that is low in sodium so you don’t exceed your daily recommended serving of 1,500mg to 2,300mg.
Another source of magnesium that you might not think about is drinking water. In Europe, there are many natural sources of magnesium-rich mineral water, but the United States only has a few sources.

If you are serious about addressing your magnesium deficiency, you should think about drinking magnesium-rich mineral water.

Different brands of bottled water have different mineral contents, depending where the water comes from and how it is filtered.

Ideally, you should choose a brand that is rich in both calcium and magnesium, but low in sodium.
Here is a list of popular bottled water brands along with their sodium, calcium, and magnesium content:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand Name</th>
<th>Magnesium (mg/L)</th>
<th>Calcium (mg/L)</th>
<th>Sodium (mg/L)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adobe Springs</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Pellegrino</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vittel</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evian</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naya</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saratoga</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perrier</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrowhead</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sparkletts</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calistoga</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland Spring</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Mountain</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crystal Geyser</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As you can tell from the table above, some brands have a high sodium content with almost negligible amounts of magnesium. Those are the ones to avoid – stick to the first few options in the table with the higher magnesium and calcium content.

Michael Bounty