

# What to Look For In a Prenatal Vitamin

**needed.<sup>®</sup>**



## Your prenatal may not be cutting it. Most are designed to meet bare minimum needs.

If you ask us, this is completely backwards. Pregnancy and postpartum are the most nutritionally-intensive times in a woman's life. Now is not the time for minimalism.

Despite what you may have been told, a Prenatal Multi is not just an insurance policy. The food we eat is depleted, and even on our best days, we often fall short of what's needed for an optimal pregnancy and postpartum. Even with a "perfect" diet, a prenatal vitamin is absolutely key to ensuring you aren't just meeting bare minimum needs, but are optimally thriving.

Many pregnancy-related ailments and complications can be addressed or prevented through proper nutrition.

You don't have to feel so terribly nauseated, or so depleted postpartum. A Prenatal Multi that optimally nourishes you can make all the difference between "just getting by" during and after pregnancy, and feeling your very best.

You deserve to thrive mama, not just survive. We started Needed to empower you to do just that.

We know that choosing the right prenatal vitamin can be very overwhelming. We've created this guide as a resource for you. It's based on the latest scientific research, as well as the clinical experience of women's health practitioners<sup>1</sup> who regularly test the nutrient needs of mamas before, during, and after pregnancy to identify where deficiencies tend to exist.

<sup>1</sup>If your OB tests your nutrient levels during and after pregnancy, you're in luck (and among the rare few)! More commonly, the only nutrient tested during pregnancy (if at all) is Iron. In contrast, the practitioners we formulated our Prenatal Multi with regularly test using comprehensive nutrient and hormone panels to fully understand mamas' needs.



## How We Designed a Better Prenatal Multi:

We started Needed to fix the perinatal nutrition paradigm of women being undersupported at this critical time, and to finally give women the complete nourishment they need. How do we do that? By understanding what women actually need in practice, not solely relying on conventional wisdom.

In many cases, the research hasn't caught up to what women actually need, so to fill in the gaps, we partnered with health practitioners who regularly test the nutrient levels of women before, during, and after pregnancy. Testing is the only way to truly know if dosage levels are sufficient in meeting the needs of pregnant and postpartum mamas.

We dove into their clinical experience, a data set of thousands of women, and what we found was shocking. RDA levels for pregnancy and breastfeeding are off in some cases by a factor of 70-100x (as with B12)!

When RDA levels are closer to meeting needs, like with Choline, (with women making up the difference in their diets), we found that literally no prenatal meets the

RDA levels, with many levels falling at 10% or less of the RDA. In other cases, the RDA level is leading vitamin companies to overdo it on nutrients like Folic Acid (which we always avoid in favor of the methyl form of Folate) and Iron.

It was clear that tweaking existing options (as most companies do!), adding a little more of this and that, wasn't going to cut it. To make a truly optimal product, we'd have to redesign the Prenatal Multi from the ground up.

So, we got to work, evaluating every nutrient individually to determine:

- i) the ideal nutrient form that your body can best use
- ii) the best source of that nutrient for mama AND mama Earth
- iii) the optimal dosage that would truly make a difference in how you feel and your baby's long-term health.

# With that in mind, these are the top vitamins and minerals, in optimal forms and dosages, to look for in a Prenatal Multi.

Keep in mind these are NOT the only nutrients you need during pregnancy--our **Prenatal Multi** contains 24 in total, and there are others beyond this list worth understanding. We summarize the importance of every nutrient we include on our website, and suggest you give it a read.

## Vitamin A 1,500 mcg RAE as 50% Beta Carotene and as 50% Retinyl Palmitate

Retinyl Palmitate is an active form that is more readily usable by the body than Beta Carotene, which is often poorly absorbed and inefficiently converted into the active form. And, many women have a genetic variation that prevents the conversion completely. Our combination provides enough Retinyl Palmitate to be effective, while still being safe for all mamas and mamas-to-be.

### How it supports mama:

- ✓ immune function healthy skin and vaginal tissues
- ✓ thyroid function
- ✓ production of hormones like estrogen and progesterone pregnancy viability (embryo implantation)
- ✓ placenta development
- ✓ adequate milk supply

### How it supports baby:

- ✓ fetal facial feature development including eyes and ears
- ✓ adequate birth weight
- ✓ full-term gestation

## Vitamin B6 40mg as Pyridoxal-5-Phosphate

Pyridoxal-5-Phosphate is bioavailable and ready to be used by the body. It's only found in animal products. Many, due to a common genetic variation, are inefficient converters of B6 Pyridoxine into the active form. Our dose is especially supportive for mamas, including for mood imbalance and nausea, and is highly safe. Many mamas are low in B6, as hormonal birth control significantly depletes the body of it.

### How it supports mama:

- ✓ minimizes nausea
- ✓ blood sugar balance
- ✓ healthy mood through production of several key neurotransmitters increasing Magnesium absorption
- ✓ protein utilization, by interconverting amino acids

### How it supports baby:

- ✓ DNA synthesis
- ✓ brain and nervous system development
- ✓ adequate birth weight healthy skin

## Vitamin B9 (Folate) 918mcg DFE as L-Methylfolate, Glucosamine Salt Quatrefolic®

We avoid Folic Acid, as 40-60% of mamas aren't able to utilize this form. Methylfolate paired with Glucosamine Salt is bioavailable and ready to be used by the body. The unmethylated Folate form found in plants is not readily converted into the usable Methylfolate form. Our dose provides enough Folate to be effective, especially for those with conversion difficulty, while still being safe for all mamas and mamas-to-be. While too little Folate can lead to mood imbalances, so can too much Folate.

### How it supports mama:

- ✓ mood imbalances, as it helps produce several key neurotransmitters
- ✓ heart health
- ✓ healthy red blood cells
- ✓ immune support
- ✓ detoxification

### How it supports baby:

- ✓ normal neural tube development
- ✓ normal midline development including the mouth
- ✓ DNA and red blood cell synthesis
- ✓ cell division, i.e. how baby grows

## Vitamin B12 **200 mcg** 100mcg each of Adenosylcobalamin and Methylcobalamin

Adenosylcobalamin and Methylcobalamin are the two active coenzyme forms that are readily usable by the body. Adenosylcobalamin supports energy and a healthy metabolism, and is often missing in prenatals. Cyanocobalamin, the more common form of B12, consists of a harmful compound that requires additional processing for safe removal from the body. We avoid this form. Our combination provides enough Vitamin B12 to be highly supportive, while still being safe for all mamas and mamas-to-be.

### How it supports mama:

- ✓ energy levels
- ✓ healthy metabolism
- ✓ cognitive health
- ✓ managing stress

### How it supports baby:

- ✓ DNA and red blood cell synthesis
- ✓ conduction of nerve impulses
- ✓ works synergistically with Folate to support normal neural tube development
- ✓ cognitive development

## Vitamin C **300mg** as Ascorbic Acid

Ascorbic Acid is the main form of Vitamin C found naturally in fruit and other foods. This is a highly efficacious dose of Vitamin C to support mama in pregnancy and postpartum as delivery and labor use extraordinary amounts of Vitamin C. We deliver our Vitamin C in plant-based beadlets for optimal nutrient absorption and protection. Our antioxidant blend is a great source of bioflavonoids, which are an important compound found in naturally-occurring Vitamin C.

### How it supports mama:

- ✓ immune function
- ✓ antioxidant - prevents cell damage
- ✓ healthy connective tissues and skin (collagen synthesis) iron absorption
- ✓ mental health as a component of the neurotransmitter norepinephrine
- ✓ metabolism and healthy energy levels

### How it supports baby:

- ✓ immune function
- ✓ cell division, i.e. how baby grows
- ✓ building cartilage, tendons, bones, teeth, blood vessels, and skin

## Choline **400mg** as Choline L(+) Bitartrate (VitaCholine™)

Choline Bitartrate is an optimal form for providing a concentrated dose that's easily absorbed. Our dose matches the RDA for nursing women. Other research suggests daily Choline intake above 930mg is optimal. On average, pregnant mamas consume just 320mg of Choline in their diet (eggs are the most common dietary source, but other foods like tofu, quinoa, and broccoli contain some Choline). Most prenatal vitamins contain 55mg of Choline or less as it's a bulky nutrient that can be difficult to formulate with.

### How it supports mama:

- ✓ healthy metabolism
- ✓ normal liver function
- ✓ efficient uptake of Omega-3 DHA
- ✓ memory and sleep-wake cycle function, due to its role in synthesizing the neurotransmitter, acetylcholine
- ✓ healthy cell membranes
- ✓ healthy blood pressure

### How it supports baby:

- ✓ normal neural tube development
- ✓ optimal brain development, including cognitive performance
- ✓ proper DNA synthesis countering some of the adverse effects of prenatal stress
- ✓ transporting Omega-3 DHA from mama to baby

## Vitamin D **4,000 IU** as D3 Cholecalciferol

Vitamin D3 is technically not a vitamin, but a prohormone. Prohormones are the building blocks of fully formed hormones. Your skin produces Vitamin D3 when it is exposed to sunlight. But, most mamas don't get enough sun and Vitamin D is difficult to get from food. In addition, many women contain genetic variations that predispose them to lower levels of Vitamin D. Vitamin D3 is more readily used by the body than Vitamin D2. Our dose provides enough to be effective, while still being safe for all mamas and mamas-to-be.

### How it supports mama:

- ✓ immune function
- ✓ calcium and phosphorus absorption
- ✓ immune function
- ✓ bind and eliminate toxins
- ✓ healthy blood pressure
- ✓ a healthy full-term pregnancy

### How it supports baby:

- ✓ immune function  
cell division, i.e. how baby grows
- ✓ forming bones and teeth
- ✓ respiratory function

## Vitamin K2 **90mcg** as K2 menaquinone-7

Vitamin K2 as MK-7 (Menaquinone-7). MK-7 is found in fermented vegetables like natto and produced by healthy colonic bacteria. It lasts longer in the body than other forms of Vitamin K2. Vitamins D3 and K2 work synergistically in the body.

### How it supports mama:

- ✓ bone health, especially
- ✓ with skeletal remodeling to prepare for birth
- ✓ blood sugar balance
- ✓ normal blood clotting
- ✓ a normal inflammatory response
- ✓ protecting skin elasticity
- ✓ utilizing Vitamin D3

### How it supports baby:

- ✓ forming and strengthening bones and teeth
- ✓ cardiovascular health
- ✓ normal blood clotting

## Magnesium **200mg** as Magnesium Bisglycinate

Magnesium Glycinate, specifically Magnesium BisGlycinate, is a mineral chelate where the Magnesium is bound to two Glycine amino acids. This form is better absorbed and gentler to digest than other forms of Magnesium. Some other forms, like Magnesium Oxide, can be so poorly absorbed that they can cause loose stools and inhibit the absorption of other nutrients. Our powder form allows us to deliver the full RDA of 400mg in an easy-to-take format. We do not recommend taking more than 400mg at once, as higher dosages may slow the nutrient's absorption.

### How it supports mama:

- ✓ healthy blood pressure
- ✓ highly supportive for back pain, constipation, headaches, hypertension, impaired insulin metabolism, leg cramps, and nausea
- ✓ promotes relaxation and improved sleep quality

### How it supports baby:

- ✓ formation of teeth and bones
- ✓ adequate birth weight
- ✓ DNA synthesis

# Other Vitamins and Minerals Your Prenatal Should Include

**Other B Vitamins including B1, B2, Niacin (B3), Pantothenic Acid (B5), Biotin (B7).**

B Vitamins are commonly depleted due to hormonal birth control and the demands of detoxification from environmental toxins. We include active forms of B vitamins that your body can optimally utilize, whether or not you have the MTHFR genetic variation.

**Other minerals including: Calcium, Iodine, Zinc, Selenium, Copper, Manganese, Chromium, Molybdenum, Sodium, Potassium.**

Due to poorer soil quality and nutrient depletion from stress, many mamas aren't meeting their needs for these key minerals that are absolutely vital to baby's optimal development and maintaining mama's health throughout pregnancy. Prenatals that exclude these nutrients aren't meeting your needs. When mamas aren't adequately supplemented, the body draws minerals from her bones and teeth to build baby's. We include minerals bound to Glycine, an essential amino acid, whenever possible as these forms are best utilized by the body and easiest on your stomach.

**Vitamin E**

The potent antioxidant properties of Vitamin E benefit women at all stages of mamahood including conception. It promotes healthy neurological function, normal cardiac function, healthy skin, and it has been shown to enhance the use of Omega-3 and Selenium in the body. The form we use are Mixed Tocopherols, antioxidants that occur naturally in foods such as nuts, seeds, and leafy green vegetables.

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## You may be wondering, **what about Iron?**

Mamas need Iron to support blood volume expansion, thyroid and immune function, fighting fatigue, and for adequate birth weight and baby's on-time neurodevelopment. However, many mamas do not need to supplement, as they take in adequate amounts through their diet alone. Excessive supplemental Iron can generate oxidative stress and alter the gut microbiome.

For mamas that do need to boost their Iron stores, the amount needed can vary widely from person to person. For this reason, we recommend talking to your health practitioner about testing your Iron status during and after pregnancy, and supplementing only if you are falling short.

When Iron is needed, we recommend it in the form that's bound to Glycine for optimal absorption and digestive comfort. We offer a Prenatal Iron that can be taken in varying dosages based on your needs.



## There's more to **prenatal nutrition** than vitamins and minerals.

### We recommend incorporating these **additional nutrients**.

#### High antioxidant botanicals

We include these in our Prenatal Multi as antioxidants are incredibly beneficial before, during, and after pregnancy. You can find antioxidants in fruits and veggies, but we include it for days (or weeks!) that you don't get in your fully optimal amount through diet alone. We've all been there (hello, first trimester nausea!)

#### Omega-3 (DHA and EPA)

95% of mamas aren't meeting their Omega-3 (DHA+EPA) needs. DHA and EPA are critical for fetal development, hormonal and mood balance in mama, postpartum recovery, healthy breastmilk, a healthy inflammatory response, and more. We deliver our Omega-3 separately from our Prenatal Multi because packaging the two together can cause Omega-3 to oxidize/degrade. Our Omega-3 absorbs 5x better than standard fish oil pills and is protected from oxidation, thanks to liposomal delivery. We source ours from cleanly and sustainably-grown vegan algae.

#### Collagen Protein

Most women aren't meeting their protein needs during pregnancy and postpartum, and several amino acids found in Collagen (Glycine and Proline) are particularly helpful during pregnancy. Mamas need protein for blood sugar management, minimizing nausea, and growing baby's cells and the placenta. Collagen is in an optimal form for all of this. It also supports mama's joints, pelvic floor tissue, skin elasticity, and postpartum hair and healthy glow. Our hydrolyzed Collagen is ethically sourced from the hides of grass-fed, pasture-raised, hormone-free bovines from New Zealand.

#### A tailored Pre/Probiotic

A strong and healthy microbiome (digestive tract, skin, and vagina) is needed for a healthy pregnancy — for you and baby. Our Pre/Probiotic is formulated in partnership with leading microbiome experts to give you the targeted spore-based and non-spore forming strains you need, and to seed your baby's microbiome for optimal health. Many probiotics do not include the specific strains that have been clinically studied. Look for letters and numbers after the species (i.e. Lactobacillus rhamnosus HN001) as these specifics really matter--especially during pregnancy and while breastfeeding!





## What's not in your prenatal is as important as what is.

### We are intentional about excluding the following:

#### Nutrients you don't need more of like Boron

There is no RDA for Boron since an essential biological role for it has not been identified. We are not looking only for essential, but for optimal. Boron has been linked to helping make Vitamin D receptors more efficient, which is helpful! However, we already consume about a milligram of Boron daily, mostly from fruit and vegetables. And, we are otherwise unintentionally taking in Boron in drinking water or through other means as it is used regularly in glass, detergents, and agriculture. At high doses, Boron has been found to be a developmental and reproductive toxin in animals. For these reasons, we do not include Boron in our Prenatal Multi and suggest you avoid supplements that contain it.

#### Potentially dangerous nutrient forms

Like Cyanocobalamin (B12) and Folic Acid (B9), as previously explained.

#### Ingredients sourced unsustainably like Vegan D3

We are mindful of what's best for mamas AND mama Earth. That's why we avoid using ingredients like Vegan D3, which is sourced from lichen that is critical to the Arctic tundra ecosystem and that grows extremely slowly.

#### Unnecessary fillers

Like stearic acid, magnesium stearate, potassium sorbate, silicon dioxide, titanium dioxide, carrageenan, artificial colors and flavors, and corn maltodextrin

#### High heavy metal loads (found in most food-based vitamins)

Food-based prenatal vitamins and plant-based protein powders often contain higher amounts of heavy metals, due to poor soil quality. We avoid heavy metals wherever possible, and do third-party testing for safety with every product batch.

#### Nutrients better taken separately

Including Omega-3 and Iron, which can interact negatively with other nutrients and even oxidize/go rancid when packaged with certain vitamins and minerals. Our separate Omega-3 and Iron also allows you to customize your dosage to your needs.



“I love this! Thank you so much! When can I get it?”

- Heather, nauseous mama

“I totally want to take it every day - like now!”

- Natalie, breastfeeding mama

## Key takeaways

Remember to look for a Prenatal Multi that includes what's needed:

- i) the ideal nutrient forms that your body can best use
- ii) the best source of that nutrient for mama AND mama earth
- iii) the optimal dosage that truly makes a difference in how you feel and your baby's long-term health

And that leaves out what's not needed.

Do your homework to ensure that the company behind the products is worthy of your trust.

And lastly, choose a Prenatal Multi that you can take easily every day of your fertility, pregnancy, and postpartum journey. You don't have to settle for incomplete gummy vitamins, or 1 or 2-a-day pills. Now there's a Prenatal Multi with complete dosages and forms of 24 vitamins and minerals in an easy-to-take, delicious vanilla powder. Even the most nauseous mamas love it.

We hope you're feeling more empowered and clear about how to choose a prenatal supplement routine to help you thrive, not just survive. We're here to help you navigate your nutrition journey at every step along the way.

Drop us a line at [hello@thisisneeded.com](mailto:hello@thisisneeded.com) or via Instagram [@needed](https://www.instagram.com/needed). We also offer a live chat on our website [thisisneeded.com](https://www.thisisneeded.com) on weekdays between 9-5pm PT. We love nerding out on nutrition with you, mama!

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