**Minerals**

Mineralsare an essential part of your bones and teeth; they help regulate body processes, yet are needed in very small amounts. Minerals are divided into two main categories: majorandtrace. You require more of the **major minerals** (0.1 g or more) than the **trace minerals** (0.01 g or less), but both are essential to your health. Some minerals are found in each of the food groups. Variety in your diet ensures that you get all of the minerals required.

**Minerals** are inorganic elements needed by the body but, unlike vitamins, they are not destroyed by heat, oxygen, acid, alkali or processing. They do become part of the human body—cells, fluid, muscles and bones. Once minerals enter the body, they remain as they are until excreted. Some are easily absorbed and transported in fluids, while others are similar to fat-soluble vitamins and need to be absorbed and transported by carriers.

Minerals are grouped into two categories: **major minerals** and **trace minerals**. One group is as important as the other. Major minerals are needed in larger amounts (0.1 g or more daily) than the trace minerals (0.01 g or less per day). Major minerals include sodium, potassium, calcium, phosphorus, chloride, sulfur and magnesium. Trace minerals include iron, iodine, zinc, copper, manganese, fluoride, chromium, selenium and molybdenum.

Vitamins and minerals often work as a team to keep the body healthy and all systems functioning properly. They boost your immune system, support growth and development and help cells and organs do their jobs. Both vitamins and minerals are vital to your health.

You know that vitamins and minerals are good for you but how much do you need? Is “more” always “better”? Do carrots really help your eyes? Why does milk give you strong bones and teeth?

**Useful links to mineral fact sheets:**

Western University

* <http://www.feinberg.northwestern.edu/nutrition/factsheets/minerals.html>

Office of Dietary Supplements, Institute of Health

* <http://ods.od.nih.gov/Health_Information/Information_About_Individual_Dietary_Supplements.aspx>

Teen Guide to Minerals

* <http://www.kidshealth.org/teen/misc/mineral_chart.html>