

Vitamins

Key words

Clinical trial: an experiment on human beings testing out a drug or medical treatment. Drugs and treatments need to go through a lot of stages of development before doctors think it is safe to have a clinical trial.

Deficiency disease: not eating enough of any one vitamin can cause a 'deficiency disease'. When this happens, the body does not work properly - the system(s) which are kept healthy by the vitamin start to go wrong. Every vitamin has its own deficiency disease. Missing vitamin C leads to bleeding inside the body (scurvy) and general weakness.

Double blind: a study in which neither the participants nor those giving the tablets know which contains the 'active' compound or the placebo.

Placebo: a tablet or drug treatment which looks on the surface like the real thing, but which contains no active ingredients.

RDI or RDA: these letters stand for 'Recommended Daily Intake' and 'Recommended Daily Allowance'. Each vitamin has an RDI - this is the amount we must eat every day to stay healthy. Food labels will often give a percentage of the RDI/RDA, so the amount of vitamin(s) in one serving of the food is clear.

Vitamins: compounds which are needed in small amounts to keep us healthy. There are at least 15 different vitamins. Vitamin molecules contain the elements carbon and hydrogen so are called organic. The compounds are made in chemical reactions which happen in cells of plants or animals.

