

Zinc

Zinc is a mineral needed to keep our immune system strong. It helps wounds heal, is required for growth and development and is involved in the synthesis of DNA and proteins, it also supports proper sense of taste and smell. Since our body can't make zinc, it's important to get enough from the foods we eat to keep everything working properly.

Food sources of zinc:

Zinc is found in a range of animal and plant-sourced foods, but the amount your body absorbs varies. Animal-sourced foods have more easily absorbed zinc. Food sources of zinc include:

- Oysters
- Red meat, chicken, fish and seafood
- Eggs and dairy products
- Beans, legumes, nuts, wholegrains

Beef and lamb are some of the most commonly eaten sources of zinc in New Zealand. Eating a varied, balanced diet with up to 500g per week of cooked, lean red meat (which equals about 700 to 750g raw) is a great way to help get enough zinc.

How much zinc do I need?

The amount of zinc you need each day depends on your age, gender, and life stage. For instance, more zinc is needed during adolescence and pregnancy to support growth and development.

Life Stage	Zinc (mg/day)
Infants: 7 - 12 months	3
Children: 1 - 3 years	3
Children: 4 - 8 years	4
Children: 9 - 13 years	6
Boys: 14 - 18 years	13
Girls: 14 - 18 years	7
Men: 19+ years	14
Women: 19+ years	8
Pregnancy	10 - 11
Breastfeeding	11 - 12



Who needs more zinc?

Some people struggle to eat enough zinc, may need more for growth and development and/or struggle to absorb it. These people include:

- Vegetarians, vegans and groups who exclude animal-sourced foods; plant-sourced foods contain compounds called phytates which limit the amount of zinc we can absorb
- Children and teenagers
- People who are pregnant or breastfeeding
- People who have had bariatric surgery or with certain conditions such as irritable bowel disease, coeliac disease, renal disease or diabetes
- People taking iron or mineral supplements as these can interfere with zinc absorption

Signs of zinc deficiency

Common signs of zinc deficiency include:

- Delayed wound healing
- Frequent infections
- Reduced sense of taste or smell
- Fatigue and poor appetite
- Stunted growth and developmental delays in children

Nutrition changes to include more zinc rich foods and supplementation may be prescribed by a registered health professional to help prevent or correct long-term health complications or deficiencies.

What's on the menu for zinc-rich eating?

Breakfast:

2 eggs on 2 pieces of wholegrain toast (2.1 mg)

Morning tea:

½ cup natural yoghurt, blueberries and 2 Tbsp sliced almonds (1.5 mg)

Lunch:

Wholemeal pita with 100g cooked chicken, salad and 2 Tbsp hummus (3.2 mg)

Afternoon tea:

4 wholegrain crackers with 1 slice of cheese (1.0 mg)

Dinner:

Beef and broccoli with crunchy noodles (7.3 mg)

Check out [recipes.co.nz](https://www.recipes.co.nz) for more delicious recipes.

Total zinc
in this menu
15.1 mg



Lean red meat can be described as nature's power pack; even a small serve has plenty of nutrients. It is high in zinc, and an important part of a healthy balanced diet, alongside wholegrains, fruits, and vegetables.

Health problems, including zinc deficiency, may result from an inadequate diet. They may also have a medical basis unrelated to diet. The information in this fact sheet is only general and is not to be taken as a substitute for medical advice in relation to specific symptoms or health concerns.

For a list of references please visit:
beeflambnz.co.nz/health-nutrition-resources
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