

Not All Children's Multivitamins are Created Equal

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DENVER — Many parents give their children some form of multivitamin to ensure they are receiving necessary amounts of vitamins and minerals. They may not be enough, however, if a child's diet is lacking iron or calcium, according to Emily McCloud, MS, RD, clinical dietician at National Jewish Health.

Most popular multivitamins for kids come in either a hard chewable or gummy form. The gummy multivitamins do not contain iron; most hard chewables do. The iron mineral is too large a molecule to include in the gummy form.

"Iron is a very important mineral in the physical development of children," said McCloud. "Children who are picky eaters often lack adequate iron in their diets."

Iron is an integral part of many proteins and enzymes that maintain good health. In children's diets iron is crucial to good health and energy. Iron deficiency leads to anemia, a shortage of healthy red blood cells, which provide oxygen to body tissues. That can cause fatigue and decreased immunity. Good sources of iron include fish, meats, legumes, fortified breads and cereals.

"Either gummy or chewable multivitamin is sufficient for children who enjoy a well-rounded diet rich in iron and other minerals. It's the children whose diet is not so well-rounded that we worry about," said McCloud. "For those who aren't getting enough iron, or are uncertain if they get enough, I recommend the hard chewable vitamins rather than the gummy ones."

Calcium is another mineral that is found in few multivitamins for children. Even vitamins that claim extra calcium contain less than 20 percent of the daily recommended amount, said McCloud.

"Typically children get plenty of calcium in their diets through milk and cheese," said McCloud. "But those who are allergic to dairy products or don't like them may need to supplement their diets with additional calcium."

National Jewish Health is known worldwide for treatment of patients with respiratory, cardiac, immune and related disorders, and for groundbreaking medical research. Founded in 1899 as a nonprofit hospital, National Jewish Health remains the only facility in the world dedicated exclusively to these disorders. Since 1998, U.S. News & World Report has ranked National Jewish the #1 respiratory hospital in the nation.

National Jewish Health is the leading respiratory hospital in the nation. Founded 120 years ago as a nonprofit hospital, National Jewish Health today is the only facility in the world dedicated exclusively to groundbreaking medical research and treatment of patients with respiratory, cardiac, immune and related disorders. Patients and families come to National Jewish Health from around the world to receive cutting-edge, comprehensive, coordinated care. To learn more, visit the media resources page.

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