

## Ask the Dietitian: Can I Get More Magnesium in My Diet by Juicing?

By Alicia Armeli

Magnesium seems to be the mineral-of-the-moment. And it should be. Our bodies need it for healthy immune function, a steady heart, strong bones, responsive nerves, and working muscles. It plays a role in regulating our sugar levels and may even help prevent diabetes in addition to other chronic diseases.<sup>1</sup> Given these benefits, you may be wondering if you're getting enough and if healthy trends like juicing can help you get more.

Most dietary magnesium is found in whole foods, such as fruits, veggies, legumes, and whole grains. But with nutrient-poor highly processed foods creeping into our food system, it's a challenge for many Americans to get the recommended amount of minerals through their diet. And even if you're a healthy eater, through no fault of your own, you still may not be getting enough.

With the use of synthetic fertilizers and increased demands for high-yielding—often genetically modified—crops, our soil and the foods grown in it are being stripped of necessary nutrients.<sup>2 3</sup> Taking it a step further, no matter how nutrient-rich a food may be, the amount your body absorbs will depend on you. According to the National Institutes of Health<sup>4</sup>, the body absorbs about 30-40 percent of dietary magnesium and this can vary depending on factors like age and genetics.

Although we may not have control over factors such as these, there are things we can do to increase magnesium intake. First and foremost, go organic. By consuming organic fruits and veggies, your body will be exposed to fewer pesticides and more nutrients. In comparison to non-organic foods, organic varieties provide significantly higher levels of nutrients like magnesium.<sup>5</sup>

If you aren't a fan of eating your greens or have a weakened digestive track that doesn't respond well to fiber, juicing is an effective alternative. By freshly juicing magnesium-rich produce like beet greens, spinach, and swiss chard<sup>6</sup>, you can get vitamins and minerals you would normally miss out on—and in a concentrated form. Juicing could easily add nutrients from several servings of fruits and veggies to your diet that would otherwise be difficult to do because of their volume.

However, be wary of store bought juice. It can contain hidden sugars and may have even less minerals than you thought. By buying local organic produce and juicing in your own kitchen, you'll be more familiar with where your veggies come from—along with the farming practices—and exactly what is and isn't in your drink.

As mentioned above, juicing could—depending on the type of machine you use—remove all the fiber. Fiber is important for digestion and may help maintain a healthy body weight. By making a



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smoothie, you'll be benefiting from all the parts of the plant—juice and fiber included. The following are things you can add to your smoothie to boost the magnesium content<sup>7</sup>:

Silken tofu	64.8 milligrams / cup
Sunflower seed butter	59 milligrams / tablespoon
Plain low-fat yogurt	41.7 milligrams / cup
Unsweetened cocoa powder	26.2 milligrams / tablespoon
Fresh raspberries	27.1 milligrams / cup
Tahini (ground sesame seeds)	14.2 milligrams / tablespoon
Fresh papaya	14 milligrams / cup

The recommended daily requirements<sup>1</sup> for magnesium are 310-320 mg for adult females. If you're pregnant or breastfeeding, intake increases to 350-400 mg and 310-360 mg respectively. Adult males need 400-420 mg.

Since an excess of magnesium can occur through supplementation, popping pills to satisfy magnesium requirements is controversial. *Choose food first*. By choosing to eat (and drink!!) organic whole foods throughout your day as part of a healthy balanced diet, you'll be more likely to give your body what it needs.

#### REFERENCES

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