

Zinc - The Magic Ingredient

by Melissa Cohen

Nutritional Therapist BSc (Hons), Mban, mIFM, NLP Practitioner



Zinc is an essential trace mineral, which is required for our body to function.

Zinc is one of the most common mineral deficiencies in the world. The World Health Organisation (WHO) stated that zinc

deficiency affects 3-73% in various regions of the world.

The highest deficiencies are in the poorer countries, and deficiency could easily be resolved through zinc supplementation. Zinc supplementation on average costs around £10 per bottle for a 2 month's supply, which is reasonable.

Zinc deficiency can significantly impact health as the body requires zinc to create more than 300 metabolic reactions that occur in the body throughout the day. Here are some examples of metabolic reactions that utilise zinc:

- Glucose metabolism, essential for regulating blood sugar and improving insulin sensitivity by enhancing signalling and glucose transporters
- Lowers cholesterol, triglycerides, and LDL (the bad cholesterol)
- Helps the digestive system absorb nutrients through our food intake
- Critical for wound healing
- Enhances taste and smell
- Supports immune function by helping to deactivate viruses and bacteria
- Boosts collagen production and supports skin health
- Supports progesterone production by stimulating follicle stimulating hormone for female hormone balance and fertility
- Supports testosterone and sperm production essential for male fertility
- Stimulates appetite
- Required for the production of all thyroid hormones

Blood testing is not the most sensitive test marker to measure zinc deficiencies, as by the time the blood markers show low zinc, symptoms will be severe. The most sensitive tests are through urine and hair analysis. These tests measure other essential minerals including chromium, copper, iodine, iron,

manganese, molybdenum, and selenium to give an overall picture of mineral balance.

You can order a zinc taste test from Zinca test by Lamberts. This is a non-diagnostic tool that may indicate a zinc deficiency. This works by taking 1 teaspoon of zinc solution in a 50ml glass of water. Then take a drink of this mixed solution and if you cannot taste the zinc then this is a sign of zinc deficiency, conversely, if you can taste strong metal then you have sufficient zinc. Also, it is very common to taste a "furry mild metallic taste" which is a sign of moderate zinc deficiency.

Signs of zinc deficiency are:

- Brittle nails and/or horizontal ridges on nails.
- Skin disorders including acne and dry skin
- Loss of hair
- Low appetite
- Low sense of taste
- Compromised immune system, prone to colds and flu

The average life span in the UK is increasing and is now 83 years. The later years can be challenging for many. Hippocrates, a Greek physician known as the father of medicine said, "Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food". In other words, acknowledging the importance of healthy eating and how nutrients in certain foods have self-healing properties.

Zinc is needed for healthy cell division, and it acts like an antioxidant, fighting free radical damage and slows down the aging process. Therefore, your first anti-ageing strategy would be a therapeutic multi vitamin with 30mg zinc.

Zinc is extremely relevant to thyroid imbalance as it is needed to form thyroid hormones. Taking selenium alongside zinc has been shown to be beneficial with Hashimoto's disease and improve



thyroid function by significantly increasing thyroxine (T4) and triiodothyronine (T3) levels and decreasing TSH.

A 2013 study discussed a young woman diagnosed with hypothyroidism who had significant hair loss and dry skin. Even after thyroid medication was administered, hair loss and dry skin persisted. A therapeutic dosage of zinc was given to this patient over a course of 4 months. Not only did her hair grow back fully, but her skin had also improved along with her mental health. This demonstrates that zinc deficiency can severely impact how someone feels, looks, and functions and how easily this can be addressed.

For optimal absorption of zinc, it is best to soak nuts and seeds to reduce phytic acids that bind to zinc and reduce absorption. Bircher muesli is a delicious breakfast recipe high in zinc where seeds and grains are soaked for optimal zinc absorption. Consumption of animal proteins enhances zinc absorption from plant based foods due to improving bioavailability.

For vegans, mixing beans with wholegrains will aid zinc absorption as this contains all your essential 9 amino acids/proteins.

Adolescents and the elderly are the most vulnerable for zinc deficiency. The demand for zinc peaks at adolescence and in the the elderly. Noticeable signs of zinc deficiency are with adolescent acne and low digestive function in the elderly.

Quick ways to absorb zinc is through zinc lozenges, zinc capsules or zinc liquid. Studies have shown supplementing with at least 30mg zinc helps shorten length and severity of colds and flu.

Food Source	Zinc Content
3 oysters	16mg
1 measuring cup pumpkin seeds	7mg
Palm size portion of beef	4.5mg
1 measuring cup of chickpeas /lentils	2.5mg
1 measuring cup of yoghurt	1.4mg
1 measuring cup of spinach	1.4mg

Bircher Muesli Recipe Serves 4

- 2 cups oats
- ¼ cup shredded coconut
- ¼ cup sliced almonds
- 2 tbsps grounded flaxseeds
- ½ cup pumpkin seeds
- ¼ cup of raisins
- ½ - 1 teaspoon of cinnamon
- 1 cup almond milk
- 2 cup organic yogurt
- 1 apple (medium, grated)

Method

- In a large bowl, combine the oats, shredded coconut, almonds, flax seeds, raisins, pumpkin seeds, and cinnamon.
- Stir in the almond milk, yogurt, and grated apple. Mix well. Cover and let soak in the fridge overnight.
- Divide into bowls or jars in the morning.



If you would like to book a session for a zinc taste test, along with a nutritional consultation in St John's Wood or Marylebone, then please email melissa@melissa-cohen.com

In the meantime, follow us on Instagram [@melissacohennutrition](https://www.instagram.com/melissacohennutrition) or drop us an email at melissa@melissa-cohen.com