# FAQs: Multivitamins for Dogs

*Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff*

Vitamins can improve the quality of your pet's life. They help regulate body processes, protect the body from environmental toxins, and break down nutrients such as carbohydrates, proteins, and fats so the body can utilize them. Vitamins work with minerals and enzymes for digestion, reproduction, muscle and bone growth, and maintenance of healthy skin and haircoat. All multi-vitamins for pets are not created equal.

- What are the functions of vitamins?
- Are there different types of vitamins?
- Do I need to supplement my puppy's diet?
- Should I supplement my adult dog's diet?
- What if my dog is super active?
- What if my dog is on a diet?
- Should I give my senior dog supplements?
- What traits should I look for in a quality vitamin?
- Can I give my pet too many vitamins?


**What are the functions of vitamins?**
Vitamins are necessary for literally tens of thousands of different chemical reactions in the body. They often work in conjunction with minerals and enzymes to assure normal digestion, reproduction, muscle and bone growth and function, healthy skin and hair, clotting of blood, and the use of fats, proteins, and carbohydrates by the body.
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**Are there different types of vitamins?**
Yes. Vitamins are generally classified into two groups based on how or if they are stored in the body. Fat-soluble vitamins are stored in the liver and fatty tissue. Water-soluble vitamins, on the other hand, are stored in only very small amounts by the body. They need to be taken in daily, and any excesses are excreted by the body each day.

*Fat-soluble vitamins include:*
Vitamin A
Vitamin D
Vitamin E
Vitamin K

*Water-soluble vitamins include:*
Vitamin C
Vitamin B1 (thiamin)
Vitamin B2 (riboflavin)
Vitamin B3 (niacin)
Vitamin B5 (pantothenic acid)
Vitamin B6 (pyridoxine)
Vitamin B12 (cyanocobalamin) and Folic Acid
Biotin

The following charts show some functions of vitamins and what can happen to your pet if deficiencies occur:

| FAT SOLUBLE VITAMINS | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Vitamin** | **Recommended Minimum Daily Dose for Dogs** | **Toxic Dose*** | **Sources** | **Signs of Deficiencies** |



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| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A** | 2272 IU/lb of food consumed on a dry matter basis | 113,600 IU/lb of food consumed on a dry matter basis | Liver, fish liver oil, vegetables, dairy products | Night blindness, retarded growth, poor quality skin and hair |
| **D** | 227 IU/lb of food consumed on a dry matter basis | 2272 IU/lb of food consumed on a dry matter basis | Sunshine, dairy products, fish liver oil | Rickets, poor eruption of permanent teeth |
| **E** | 23 IU/lb of food consumed on a dry matter basis | 455 IU/lb of food consumed on a dry matter basis | Cold pressed vegetable oils, meats, nuts, green leafy vegetables | Reproductive failure, brown bowel syndrome |
| **K** | Synthesized in the body | none | Kelp, alfalfa, egg yolk | Increased clotting time and hemorrhage |
| *This dose must be given daily for months to create toxicity. | | | | |

| **WATER SOLUBLE VITAMINS** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Vitamin** | **Recommended Minimum Daily Dose for Dogs** | **Sources** | **Signs of Deficiencies** |
| **Vitamin C** | Not required, synthesized in the liver of healthy dogs | Citrus fruits and vegetables | Slowed healing, increased susceptibility to disease |
| **Vitamin B1 (Thiamin)** | .01 mg/lb. | Plants, fruit, vegetables, milk, meat | Loss of appetite, loss of reflexes, loss of nerve control, weakness |
| **Niacin** | .12 mg/lb. | Meat, meat by-products | Loss of appetite and weight, inflamed gums, hemorrhagic diarrhea |



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| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Vitamin B2 (Riboflavin)** | .05 mg/lb. | Organ meats and dairy products | Poor growth, eye abnormalities, heart failure |
| **Vitamin B5 (Pantothenic Acid)** | .1 mg/lb. | Meats and vegetables | Hair loss, diarrhea, premature graying |
| **Vitamin B6 (Pyridoxine)** | .01 mg/lb. | Found in most foods, damaged during processing | Anemia, poor growth, skin lesions |
| **Folic Acid** | .002 mg/lb. | Organ meats | Hypoplasia of bone marrow, macrocytic anemia |
| **Vitamin B12(Cyanocobalamin, cobalamin)** | .00025 mg/lb. | Organ meats, animal sources | Macrocytic anemia |
| **Biotin** | .001 mg/lb. | Corn, soybeans, beef liver | Poor hair, dry skin, diarrhea |

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**Do I need to supplement my puppy's diet?**
To ensure your puppy is always in top form, feed a healthy, quality food, and supplement when necessary. A daily multi-vitamin such as Lifestage Select® Puppy Vitamins may help ensure that growing puppies get the vitamins they need for healthy tissues, strong bones, and overall good health.
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**Should I supplement my adult dog's diet?**
To ensure your dog is always in top form, feed a healthy, quality food, and supplement when necessary. Older animals tend to absorb fewer vitamins, minerals, and electrolytes through the intestinal tract, and lose more of them through the kidneys and urinary tract. Also, some older animals eat less (due to conditions such as oral disease) and may not receive their daily needs of vitamins and minerals. Some evidence in other species suggest that antioxidants such as vitamins A, E, and C (beta-carotene) may play a role in protecting against some normal aging processes. Talk with your veterinarian to determine which supplements may be beneficial for your dog.
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**What if my dog is super active?**
Lifestage Select® Adult includes all of the vitamins your pet needs for a healthy life. It is especially beneficial for very active animals and also for animals under a lot of stress. When you give your pet Lifestage Select® Adult or any of our Lifestage Select® series, you can be assured that your pet is getting correct vitamins for his lifestyle and for his stage of life.
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**What if my dog is on a diet?**
High quality light foods should contain adequate vitamins and minerals. If you are only feeding your pet less of his regular food to cut down, you may want to supplement with a multivitamin.
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**Should I give my senior dog supplements?**
Aging dogs have special nutritional needs, and some of those can be supplied in the form of supplements. Lifestage Select® Senior, has higher levels of the vitamins and minerals your senior dog may need.

A large percentage of older dogs suffer from arthritis. We recommend a daily supplement containing glucosamine, such as Lifestage Select® Senior Plus, for dogs suffering from arthritis, hip dysplasia, or other bone or joint problems. If your dog is



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not eating a complete balanced diet, then a vitamin/mineral supplement is recommended to prevent any deficiencies.
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**What traits should I look for in a quality vitamin?**

Our advice to you is to check the label before giving any vitamin/mineral supplement to your pet and look for the following qualities:

- Contains at least 8 essential vitamins including Vitamin A, B-complex, D, and E, as well as the B vitamins. Vitamins A and E are all-important antioxidants that help maintain a healthy immune system and should also be included in the supplement.
- Vitamins and minerals should be in the correct ratio for your pet's good health.
- High palatability (Lifestage Select® multivitamins are all formulated with a delicious bacon/liver flavor that will tempt the fussiest pet!).

In addition, look at the ingredient list of multi-vitamin supplements to see from which sources the vitamins and minerals are coming. For instance, our Lifestage Select® multivitamins contain:

- B-Complex and zinc from Brewer's Yeast and other sources
- Magnesium from wheat germ and fish, and other sources
- Calcium from non-fat dried milk, and other sources
- Fatty acids from marine sources, such as cod liver oil
- Iron from natural sources, such as liver, as well as other sources

Not all vitamin supplements contain these quality ingredients. And, remember that whatever your particular pet's species or age, the right supplementation will help him live the best quality life possible.
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**Can I give my pet too many vitamins?**
There is always some controversy regarding vitamin supplementation. Many people feel supplements are very necessary. They feel that even when feeding a high quality food, some of the vitamins may have been destroyed by the processing or storage. Pet owners feeding a homemade diet or a diet high in table scraps should give their pet a high quality vitamin/mineral supplement. Ill or recovering pets who may have a poor appetite should also be given a good vitamin/mineral supplement since they are not receiving their daily requirements through the food they eat.

The possibility of vitamin toxicity with the fat-soluble vitamins, especially Vitamin A and D, which are stored in the body, can occur with severe oversupplementation. Toxicities do not occur when you give your pet the recommended amount of high-quality, commercially prepared vitamin/mineral supplements. However, if you give a variety of supplements, each containing Vitamin A or D, oversupplementation is more likely. Supplements must be chosen with care and large numbers of different supplements should not be used together unless prescribed by a veterinarian.
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