



Unless otherwise stated on the packaging, vitamin and mineral supplements should be taken immediately after food. Just four bites of food or a glass of orange juice will do. If you have not eaten for more than 20 minutes, don't take your supplements. Wait until you have a snack/juice and take them then. If taken on an empty stomach, some can cause nausea or indigestion.

Wash supplements down with water or orange juice. Don't take them with coffee or tea, as these may interfere with absorption. Substances found in tea and coffee can inhibit iron absorption by up to 80 per cent if drunk within an hour of a meal or taking a supplement.

Grapefruit juice is also known to interact with a number of prescribed and over-the-counter drugs. Although little information is known about the interaction between grapefruit juice and herbal medicines, it is wise not to combine them, just in case.

Fat-soluble substances (e.g. co-enzyme Q10, evening primrose oil, fish oils, vitamins A, D, E, K) should ideally be taken with food containing some fat (e.g. milk). If taking a fish oil supplement that produces fishy 'burps' try emulsifying the oil by shaking your dose with a little milk to increase absorption and reduce after-taste.



If you take a one-a-day vitamin and mineral supplement, it is usually best taken after your evening meal rather than with breakfast. This is because repair processes and mineral movements in your body are greatest at night when growth hormone is secreted.

Where you have to take two or more capsules of the same preparation, however, it is a good idea to spread these out over the day in order to maximise absorption and cause less fluctuation in blood levels.

But, a day's dose is better taken at the time you are most likely to remember. Don't feel you have to follow any strict regime if you find difficulty remembering to take supplements at a certain time, or if they do not fit in with your particular lifestyle. It's easier to remember to take supplements if you get into a routine and take them at the same time each day. Keep them by your toothbrush, for example, or by your keyboard if this helps you remember (as long as they are out of the reach of young children).

If taking the lighter, gelatin capsules, look down at the floor as you swallow to help them go down more easily. For heavier tablets, put your head back as you swallow to help the action of gravity. Don't swallow supplements in a hurry – if you take your time, your throat muscle will be more relaxed and tablets are less likely to lodge in your gullet.