

When are vitamins prescribed?

Vitamins are prescribed if you:

- Lack the vitamin (this may be confirmed by a blood test)
- Have a medical condition where you need to take a vitamin long term e.g. pernicious anaemia, certain bowel conditions that affect how your body absorbs nutrients

Vitamins are **not** prescribed:

- as a general pick-me-up or for general wellbeing or
- where there is little evidence that they improve health or wellbeing.

How long will I need to take a vitamin for?

- Most vitamin prescriptions are only needed for a short period of time
- They are usually prescribed for a set period of time to treat or prevent a vitamin deficiency
- Your doctor, nurse or pharmacist will review your treatment regularly to see if you still need it

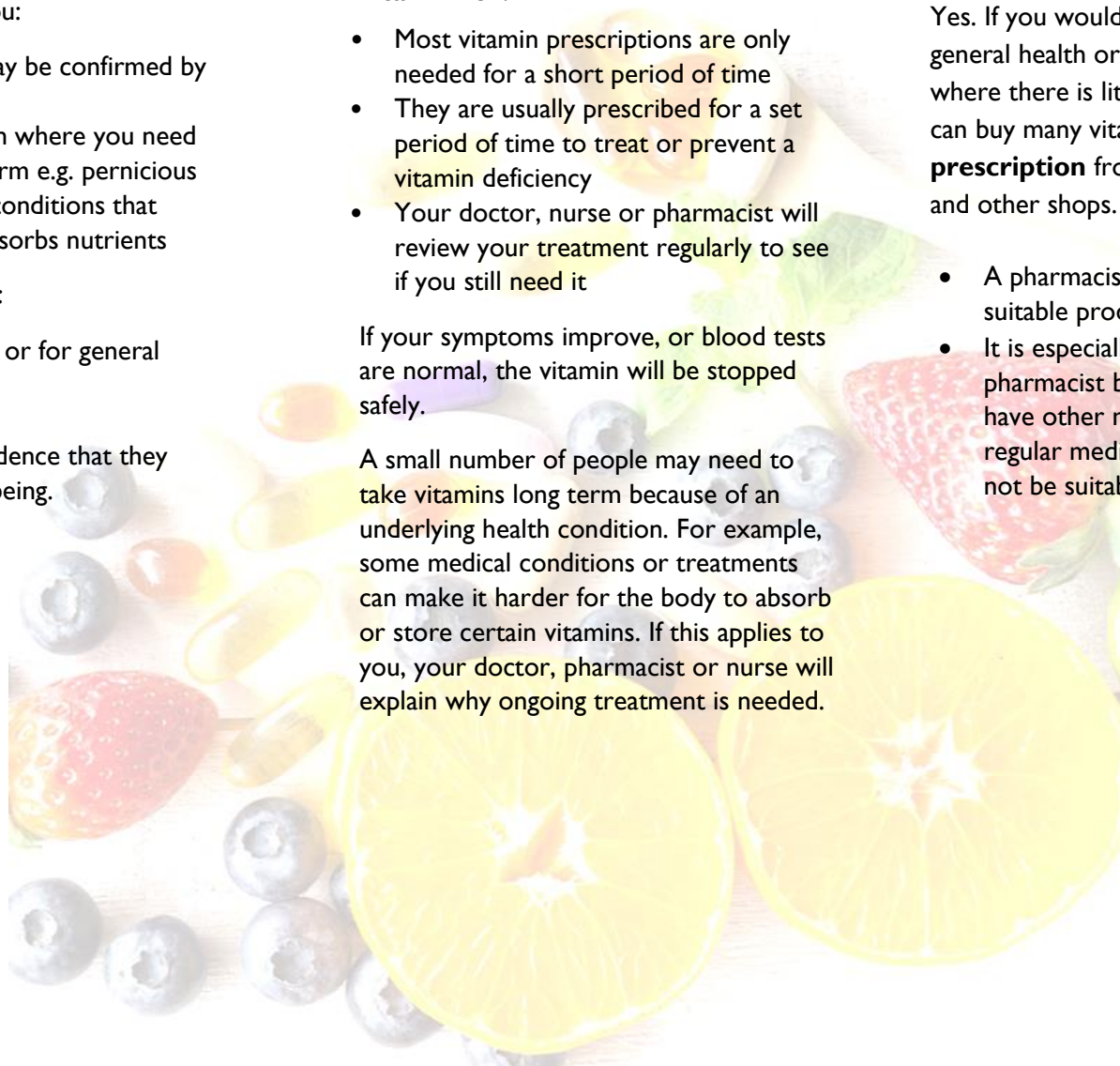
If your symptoms improve, or blood tests are normal, the vitamin will be stopped safely.

A small number of people may need to take vitamins long term because of an underlying health condition. For example, some medical conditions or treatments can make it harder for the body to absorb or store certain vitamins. If this applies to you, your doctor, pharmacist or nurse will explain why ongoing treatment is needed.

Can I buy vitamins myself?

Yes. If you would like to take a vitamin for general health or wellbeing or for a condition where there is little evidence of benefit, you can buy many vitamin supplements **without a prescription** from pharmacies, supermarkets and other shops.

- A pharmacist can help you choose a suitable product
- It is especially important to speak to a pharmacist before taking vitamins if you have other medical conditions or take regular medications, as some vitamins may not be suitable for everyone



Can I get vitamins from my food instead?

Yes – for most adults vitamins and minerals should come from a healthy, balanced diet rather than from vitamin supplements.

Eating a variety of foods can help you get all the nutrients that you need to stay healthy. Different foods contain different vitamins and minerals, so it is important to eat a range of foods including:

- Fruits and vegetables
- Wholegrain foods such as bread, pasta and rice
- Milk and dairy foods, or suitable dairy alternatives
- Meat, fish and eggs
- Beans, lentils and other pulses
- Nuts and seeds

What should I do if my vitamins are stopped?

- If your vitamin is stopped by your healthcare professional, this is because it is no longer needed and is safe to stop taking.
- If you wish to continue taking a vitamin supplement, your pharmacist can advise on whether an over the counter vitamin is suitable for you.

For more information on vitamins, minerals and healthy eating, visit the links below:

- Vitamins and minerals - NHS [Vitamins and minerals - NHS](#)
- Eatwell guide | HSC Public Health Agency
[Eatwell guide | HSC Public Health Agency](#)

If you are unsure if your diet is meeting your nutritional needs, speak to your doctor, pharmacist, nurse or dietitian.

Your Vitamins: What You Need To Know

Why has my vitamin not been prescribed?

Vitamins and minerals are important for good health, but they should only be prescribed when they are really needed.

This supports a Department of Health initiative to ensure medicines are used safely, effectively and only when they provide a clear health benefit: [Position Statements | NI Formulary](#)

Healthcare professionals only prescribe vitamin supplements when they are:

- Needed for your condition
- Safe for you to take
- Used for the right amount of time

Any review of your vitamin prescription ensures that your treatment continues safely if it is still needed.