



# Food Fortification in Canada

## Current Practices

### What is food fortification?

Most foods naturally contain vitamins and minerals which your body requires in small amounts to remain healthy. For example, oranges are rich in vitamin C, as well as potassium and folate. Food fortification is the addition of vitamins and minerals such as vitamin D in milk or thiamine in breakfast cereal.

### Why fortify?

Food fortification plays an important role in ensuring the health of Canadians. Adding vitamins and minerals to food helps:

- protect Canadians against nutritional deficiencies - for example, requiring all milk to be fortified with vitamin D virtually eliminated childhood rickets since the 1970's;
- maintain and improve the nutritional quality of the Canadian food supply - for example, enriching flour with B vitamins and iron replaces those same nutrients lost in processing;
- reduce the risk of diet-related chronic diseases - for example, fortification contributes to adequate intakes of calcium and vitamin D which help build strong bones and may reduce the risk of osteoporosis.

### Fortification Regulations

Most Canadians recognize the valuable role and positive impact that foods containing vitamins and minerals, whether naturally occurring or added, can have on their health. Perhaps less recognized, and yet equally important from a health standpoint, is that some vitamins and minerals can produce adverse health effects if consumed in amounts much greater than needed.

For example, if women consume high amounts of vitamin A which may be obtained from some supplements shortly before or during pregnancy, it can lead to birth defects.

Controlling the addition of vitamins and minerals to our foods is one way Health Canada ensures that Canadians receive the nutrients they need, but are not exposed to levels that are dangerously high. The addition of vitamins and minerals to food in Canada is controlled by the Food and Drug Regulations and only foods fortified with certain nutrients, and to levels specified in the Regulations, may be sold in Canada.

### The current Food and Drug Regulations permit food fortification to:

- replace nutrients lost in the manufacturing process;
- act as a public health intervention;
- ensure the nutritional equivalence of substitute foods; or
- ensure the appropriate vitamin and mineral nutrient composition of foods for special dietary purposes.

For more information on food fortification, visit [www.healthcanada.gc.ca/fortification](http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/fortification).