



## Use of Vitamins and Herbal Supplements

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### Scleroderma Foundation Michigan Chapter

The Scleroderma Foundation recommends that scleroderma patients consult a physician before including vitamins and herbal supplements into their diet.

#### GENERAL DIET RECOMMENDATIONS

Consider taking an over-the-counter multivitamin or mineral supplement containing:

- 15 mg zinc;
- 10 to 18 mg iron;
- vitamins A, D, E, K, folate, and B-12

If specific nutrient deficiencies have been identified, extra supplementation may be required. If you have bloating or distention, taking a probiotic supplement such as Align<sup>®</sup> or Culturelle<sup>®</sup> may help restore intestinal function and alleviate symptoms.

Include a high-protein liquid nutrition supplement (such as Ensure<sup>®</sup> Plus or Boost Plus<sup>®</sup>) between meals one to three times per day. If you are unable to tolerate those options, try Boost Breeze<sup>®</sup>, a high protein juice-based alternative.

#### Managing Specific Scleroderma- Related Issues

**Decreased GI motility and constipation:** Exercise, such as walking, helps move food through the digestive tract. Eat a high fiber diet including 100 percent whole grains, fruits and vegetables. Take a daily probiotic supplement (such as Align<sup>®</sup> or Culturelle<sup>®</sup>) and/or eat yogurt with active cultures regularly. Remember to increase your fluid intake.

**Fatigue:** Eat small, frequent meals to provide continuous energy and keep blood sugar from dipping too low. Increase fluid intake. Participate in 30 to 60 minutes of moderate daily exercise such as walking, bike riding, pool exercise, Pilates, yoga or Tai chi. Sleep for seven to eight hours each night. If iron levels are low, which is typical of someone with chronic disease, discuss additional iron supplementation with your doctor. If you currently take an iron pill, take it with juice containing vitamin C to allow for better absorption.

**Tight, thickened skin:** Eat foods rich in vitamin E such as nuts, seeds, wheat germ, and canola, olive, and peanut oils; consider taking 5 mg (5000 mcg) biotin supplement, which may help skin and nails.