

**USDA Dietary Supplement Ingredient Database
Release 3.0 (DSID-3)**

**Non-prescription Prenatal Multivitamin/mineral (MVM)
Dietary Supplement Study**

Research Summary

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1. Introduction

The Dietary Supplement Ingredient Database (DSID) evaluates levels of ingredients in dietary supplement products. The Nutrient Data Laboratory (NDL), Beltsville Human Nutrition Research Center, Agricultural Research Service (ARS), US Department of Agriculture (USDA), developed the DSID with the Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS) of the National Institutes of Health and other federal partners (National Center for Health Statistics of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Food and Drug Administration, National Cancer Institute of the National Institutes of Health and National Institute of Standards and Technology [NIST] of the Department of Commerce). ODS is the primary funder of the DSID, which builds on the well-recognized strengths of the NDL in developing databases that support assessments of intakes of nutrients from foods.

For more detailed information on the history of this project and the DSID pilot studies, please read the [Background Information and Pilot Study Research Summary](#), available on the DSID-3 website.

A. Public Health Implications of Obtaining Prenatal Multivitamin/mineral Data

Dietary supplementation is commonly recommended during pregnancy and lactation, although only a few reports document the extent of this practice in North America (Picciano and McGuire, 2009). These reports suggest that well over half of pregnant and lactating women take a dietary supplement and usage is likely greater during pregnancy than lactation. Collection of intake data in this population is critical to document current usage, understand the extent to which the supplements these women take contribute to their overall nutrient intakes, and help implement future recommendations concerning supplement usage to ensure adequate micronutrient intake.

Some prenatal multivitamin/mineral (MVM) products available in the United States are manufactured for sale as non-prescription dietary supplements (meaning that purchasers do not need a prescription from a healthcare provider). Others are manufactured for sale only with a prescription.

There were no reports on comprehensive evaluation of differences in nutrient composition of prescription and non-prescription MVMs (as claimed by the products' labels). Analytical content of these two categories of prenatal MVM has not been studied systematically. Analytically derived estimates of nutrient content would be valuable to support studies of total nutrient intake of women who use these supplements during pregnancy and lactation. This study focused on the analytical content of non-prescription prenatal MVMs. A future study will address the analytical content of prescription prenatal MVMs.

2. Overview of the Non-prescription Prenatal MVM Study

A study of non-prescription prenatal MVMs was conducted to estimate the relationship between label and analytical values for 21 vitamins and minerals in a nationally representative sample. Non-prescription prenatal MVMs were defined for this study as products containing at least three vitamins, with or without minerals or other bioactive components, sold for prenatal use and available for purchase without a health-care provider's prescription.

Protocols established in previous DSID MVM studies were applied where appropriate. Products identified as representative of the US market were purchased from retail outlets and through direct-to-consumer sales channels. Samples of multiple lots of these products were sent to qualified laboratories for analysis of ingredients using validated methods and appropriate quality assurance measures. The final analytical dataset was statistically analyzed using regression techniques to estimate relationships between label claims and analytically measured ingredient content and to analyze sources for predicted content variability.

These study results and their National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) application tables were released for the first time in DSID-3 (<http://dsid.usda.nih.gov>) in 2015.

3. Sampling Plan

NDL consulted with statisticians to set up a sampling frame for purchasing dietary supplement samples to ensure they were representative of the US market. The purpose of the sampling plan was to select sample units from multiple geographic areas of the United States that, when analyzed, could provide reliable and representative estimates of means and variability for ingredient content. Using a multistage probability-proportional-to-size approach with US Census data (Pehrsson et al., 2000), locations for product sampling were selected.

To identify commonly reported and representative products for purchase, NDL researched prenatal MVM products reported by NHANES 2005-06 respondents. The number of reported products was small, some had been discontinued or recalled and others were prescription MVM products. Moreover, several discrepancies were identified between products reported in NHANES 2005-06 and those found in stores in 2009. The market for non-prescription prenatal MVMs was apparently changing (and possibly growing) rapidly. Thus, the NHANES product and market share information was not sufficient to compose a comprehensive sampling plan for this study.

Store surveys showed that a larger variety and amount of products was available at natural-food and other specialty retailers (e.g., Whole Foods and GNC) than at mass-market retailers (e.g., CVS and Target). In collaboration with statisticians, a retail sampling plan was developed based on estimates of market channel distribution from

the Nutrition Business Journal (NBJ, 2008). It was concluded that purchasing of a large variety of brands and products would best represent non-prescription prenatal MVMs available on the US market.

Six US counties were identified as purchase locations in Alabama, California, Colorado, Michigan, Missouri and New York. Contracted shoppers in each state purchased samples of all prenatal products on the store shelves (up to 40 products total from up to 15 different stores). Shoppers purchased a minimum of 180 tablets (or 32 ounces for liquids) of the same lot of each product that met this study's definition of a prenatal MVM product.

An evaluation of the direct sales market identified many products available online and through multi-level marketers (e.g., Amway, Melaleuca and Herbalife). Non-prescription prenatal MVMs sold through direct channel sources were scored based on a number of factors, including how many websites sold the product and whether the product was sold by one of the 32 top direct supplement companies. 12 most commonly sold (high scored) and 11 randomly chosen non-prescription prenatal MVMs sold through direct sales channels were purchased.

In total, multiple lots of 71 different non-prescription prenatal MVM products were purchased in 2009-2010 and analyzed in 2009-2011.

4. Laboratory Analysis and Quality Control

The purchased products were sent to NDL for processing. Relevant information on each product (e.g., ingredient names and levels, lot number, purchase location and date, and expiration date) was recorded in NDL's in-house database. Samples were repackaged and sent for laboratory analysis in defined batches.

Qualified analytical contract laboratories analyzed the sample sets using validated sample-handling protocols and appropriate methods to obtain analytical information about ingredient levels (Table 1).

Table 1. Analytical Methods

Nutrients	Analytical Method(s) Used
Calcium Copper Iron Magnesium Manganese Phosphorus Potassium Zinc	Multi-element inductively coupled plasma spectrometry (ICP) after wet ashing
Chromium	Atomic absorption spectroscopy (AAS), with a matrix-matched standard
Iodine	Two methods: Thiosulfate titration and ICP-mass spectrometry(MS)
Selenium	Hydride generation with AAS
Beta-carotene Riboflavin Thiamin	High-performance liquid chromatography with ultraviolet detection
Niacin Vitamin B6	Two methods: HPLC with UV detection and microbiological
Vitamin D	Two methods: HPLC with UV detection and HPLC- MS/MS
Retinol	HPLC with UV detection for quantification and fluorescence detection for confirmation
Folic acid Vitamin B-12	Microbiological
Vitamin E	HPLC with fluorescence detection

Results for nine vitamins and 11 minerals are reported in this study. The major components of vitamin A (retinol and beta-carotene) were measured separately, converted to international units (IU) and combined to calculate total vitamin A for comparison to label levels. In some cases, more than one method of analysis was used to accurately measure unusual ingredient forms or low ingredient levels or to replace older methods with newer technologies. Methods for the analysis of chromium and iodine improved during this study. The single-element standard initially used to measure chromium by atomic absorption spectroscopy was replaced by a multiple-element material that matched the product matrix. The iodine analysis method changed from titration to a more consistent ICP spectrometry/mass spectrometry method.

Quality control (QC) materials were added to each batch of prenatal MVM products to evaluate laboratory precision and accuracy on an ongoing basis. NIST Standard Reference Material (SRM) 3280, an MVM matrix with certified values for vitamins and minerals, was sent in each product batch. In addition, each batch included a set of

product duplicates and at least two in-house control materials that were analyzed for all ingredients in the study. Each product sample contained at least 20 units (tablets, capsules or liquid serving amounts) of the MVM product. Labs were instructed to homogenize at least 20 sample units before sub-sampling for analysis (per the United States Pharmacopeia recommendations for the analysis of dietary supplements). For each in-house control material, a case of a single lot of an MVM product with a similar matrix to the study samples was purchased.

Analytical retests were conducted to check unusually high or low results, high variability among product lots or and questionable data in batches where QC results showed a bias. For each sample analyzed, laboratory results reported in mg/g or µg/g were compared to label levels and a percent difference from the label levels was calculated.

5. Statistical Analysis

Ingredient data from the laboratory analysis were prepared for statistical analysis. Observations were equally weighted. To identify overly influential supplement observations, a jackknife technique was used to calculate Cook's distances and restricted likelihood distances.

Relationships between the label and percent difference from label across the range of label levels analyzed were estimated by regression with SAS® mixed model procedure. For each supplement ingredient, the label value was the independent variable and the percent difference from the label level (based on the laboratory analysis) was the dependent variable. Percent differences from label were calculated: $((\text{analytical value} - \text{label value}) / \text{label value}) \times 100\%$. Three models (mean, linear and quadratic) were used to fit the data for all ingredients, and the most complex and statistically significant model was selected. Lab, supplement within label level and lot within supplement were modeled as random sources of variation. The accuracy of the models' predictions was assessed with validation techniques.

The selected regression equations were used to predict mean analytical levels for each ingredient in non-prescription prenatal MVMs: $\text{label value} \times (1 + \text{predicted percent difference}/100)$. In the DSID-3 files, these mean predictions are shown in application tables as predicted percent differences from the label level or as predicted values in international units (IU), mg, or µg per serving. The mean predictions were linked to label levels for each ingredient and were not specific to any brand or supplement of this prenatal MVM category.

In addition, the standard error of the mean (SEM) and the standard error (SE) of an individual observation were calculated at each label level. Because the regression equation could be used to predict ingredient values of independent supplement samples, SEs were adjusted using sums of squares to reflect this expected greater prediction variability.

6. Results

In this study, regression results are reported for the following 20 vitamins and minerals: folic acid, niacin, riboflavin, thiamin, vitamin A, vitamin B-12, vitamin B-6, vitamin C, vitamin D, vitamin E, calcium, chromium, copper, iodine, iron, magnesium, manganese, potassium, selenium and zinc.

Regression results for mean predicted percent differences from label levels and the associated standard errors (SEs) varied by ingredient and are reported by ingredient level. Detailed results for this study, including all regression equations and applications to NHANES dietary supplement data files, are listed in the data files released in DSID-3.

The regression results for the most common label level in the prenatal MVM study are summarized in Tables 2 and 3 below. Table 2 lists the predicted mean percent differences from label values for vitamins and Table 3 does the same for minerals.

Table 1: Predicted Means for Vitamins in Non-prescription Prenatal MVMs

Ingredient	Range of Predicted Mean Percent Differences from Label Levels	Most Common Label Level per Serving	Predicted Mean Percent Differences at Most Common Label Level
Folic acid	0.5%*	800 mcg	0.5%
Niacin	-16.9% to 1.5%	20 mg	-0.4%
Riboflavin	0.9%*	1.7 mg	0.9%*
Thiamin	-9.2%	1.8 mg	-9.2%
Vitamin A	2.4%	4,000 IU	2.4%
Vitamin B-6	-3.0%*	2.6 mg	-3.0%*
Vitamin B-12	-18.9% to 7.1%	8 mcg	2.9%
Vitamin C	3.6%*	120 mg	3.6%*
Vitamin D	13.1%	400 IU	13.1%
Vitamin E	5.7%*	30 IU	5.7%

IU: international units; * Not significantly different from label

Table 2: Predicted Means for Minerals in Non-prescription Prenatal MVMs

Ingredient	Range of Predicted Mean Percent Differences from Label Levels	Most Common Label Level per Serving	Predicted Mean Percent Differences at Most Common Label Level
Calcium	-4.3 to 14.3%	200 mg	11.8%
Copper	8.6%	2 mg	8.6%
Iodine	25.9%	150 mcg	25.9%
Iron	1.1%*	30 mg	1.1%*
Magnesium	3.4%	100 mg	3.4%
Manganese	6.8%	2 mg	6.8%
Potassium	20.2%	10 mg	20.2%
Selenium	13.1%	100 mcg	13.1%
Zinc	-4.1 to 7.6%	15 mg	3.9%
Chromium	10.0 to 85.0%	120 mcg	48.5%

* Not significantly different from label.

When analyzed across all label levels, the predicted mean percent differences from label levels for folic acid, riboflavin, vitamin A, vitamin B-6, vitamin C, vitamin E and iron were not significantly different from the label value. Predicted mean percent differences within a 3 to 15% above label range were found for vitamin D and for the majority of minerals (calcium, chromium, copper, magnesium, manganese, selenium and zinc). Phosphorus was analyzed in these MVMs. However, since only 8 products claimed phosphorus content, the analytical results were not analyzed by regression.

Predicted mean percent differences from label levels were substantially higher than label values for three ingredients. For iodine and potassium, label levels were within a +20 to +26% range and predicted mean overages for chromium reached +85% at the lower label levels.

Three vitamins have predicted mean values substantially below label levels. The mean analytical prediction for thiamin was -9.2%. Niacin and vitamin B-12 content was predicted to be -16.9% and -18.9% at their higher label levels, respectively.

These data can provide researchers with more accurate estimates of nutrient intake for non-prescription prenatal MVM than the label levels.

7. Use of Regression Equations

The regression equations for non-prescription prenatal MVMs released in DSID-3 predict the mean percent differences from label levels for 20 ingredients in prenatal MVM supplements sold in the United States. The predictions are linked to label levels

for each ingredient and are not specific to any brand or supplement. These predictions of mean ingredient levels per serving are applicable to MVMs in large population surveys of supplement use.

The predicted standard error of the mean (SEM) is the SE for this mean prediction. The regression equations also estimate the SE for an individual product at specific label levels. This SE is much larger than the SEM because it represents the error of prediction for an individual product vs. the error of prediction of a mean value for many products.

Results predicted by regression for the mean percent difference from label level and the SEs are linked to NHANES products at the label levels reported for those ingredients. The predicted results from the DSID can be used to replace information from labels to more accurately assess ingredient intakes from dietary supplements.

The details on the DSID-3 data files and instructions for their use are described in a separate report, [DSID-3 Data Files and Description](#), available on the DSID-3 website. Please refer to that report for additional information about how to interpret and use each data file.

An online, interactive, [Non-Prescription Prenatal MVM Calculator](#) has been released with DSID-3. This calculator should only be used to generate estimates for non-prescription prenatal MVMs because the results from this study may not reflect the analytical content of prescription prenatal MVMs. This calculator allows the user to enter ingredient information from MVM labels and generate the appropriate predicted mean values and SEs at those label levels.

8. Future Research

Additional DSID studies are underway to evaluate ingredient quantities in prescription prenatal MVMs and green tea dietary supplements. Future data releases are planned to include results from these two studies and to monitor ingredient levels in adult MVMs over time. Estimates for vitamin D, vitamin A and chromium in adult MVMs, previously not reported, will be released in the future.

9. References

Pehrsson PR, Haytowitz DB, Holden JM, Perry CR, Beckler DG. USDA's national food and nutrient analysis program: Food sampling. *J Food Comp Anal* 2000;13:379-389.

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