

# Selenium

## Why it's important

Selenium is part of many important enzymes, which are substances that our bodies make to speed up reactions. The amount of selenium in plant food varies depending on how much is in the soil the plant is grown in.

## Recommended intakes

In the UK, recommended daily intakes of selenium for adults are 60mcg (micrograms) for women and 75 mcg for men, which are based on the assumption that a higher intake is required for people with a higher body weight. It is important to avoid eating too much selenium because it can cause a condition called selenosis.

## Sources of selenium

The selenium content of Brazil nuts is variable, but tends to be high, and eating just two a day might meet your body's need<sup>2,3</sup>. Alternatively, you could use a supplement to guarantee a reliable selenium intake.

## Summary

- In the UK, recommended daily selenium intakes are 60mcg for women and 75mcg for men
- Eating just two Brazil nuts daily might meet your selenium requirement
- Alternatively, you could use a supplement to guarantee a reliable selenium intake (please discuss the use of supplements with a health professional)

## References

1. COMMITTEE ON MEDICAL ASPECTS OF FOOD AND NUTRITION POLICY (1991) *Dietary Reference Values for Food Energy and Nutrients for the United Kingdom*, London: HMSO
2. UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (2016) *Food Composition Databases* available from: <https://ndb.nal.usda.gov/> (viewed 23-NOV-2016)
3. THOMSON, CD, CHISHOLM, A, MCLACHLAN SK AND CAMPBELL, JM (2008) *Brazil nuts: an effective way to improve selenium status*, American Journal of Clinical Nutrition 87:379–84