Zinc is an essential trace element for humans, animals and plants. It is vital for many biological functions and plays a crucial role in more than 300 enzymes in the human body. The adult body contains about 2-3 grams of zinc. Zinc is found in all parts of the body: it is in organs, tissues, bones, fluids and cells. Muscles and bones contain most of the body’s zinc (90%).

Who needs zinc?
Everyone needs zinc. Children need zinc to grow, adults need zinc for health. Growing infants, children and adolescents, pregnant women and lactating mothers, athletes, vegetarians and the elderly often require more zinc.

Where do we get zinc from?
We get zinc primarily from our food. The major sources of zinc are (red) meat, poultry, fish and seafood, whole cereals and dairy products. Zinc is most available to the body from meat. The bioavailability of plant-based foods is generally lower due to dietary fibre and phytic acid which inhibit the absorption of zinc.

A balanced diet is the best way to provide your body with zinc.

Zinc - vital for growth and cell division
Zinc is especially important during pregnancy, for the growing fetus whose cells are rapidly dividing. Zinc also helps to avoid congenital abnormalities and pre-term delivery. Zinc is vital in activating growth - height, weight and bone development - in infants, children and teenagers.

Zinc – vital for fertility
Zinc plays a vital role in fertility. In males, zinc protects the prostate gland from infection (prostatitis) and ultimately from enlargement (prostatic hypertrophy). Zinc helps maintain sperm count and mobility and normal levels of serum testosterone.

In females, zinc can help treat menstrual problems and alleviate symptoms associated with premenstrual syndrome (PMS).

Zinc – vital for the immune system
Among all the vitamins and minerals, zinc shows the strongest effect on our all-important immune system. Zinc plays a unique role in the T-cells. Low zinc levels lead to reduced and weakened T-cells which are not able to recognize and fight off certain infections. An increase of the zinc level has proven effective in fighting pneumonia and diarrhea and other infections. Zinc can also reduce the duration and severity of a common cold.

http://www.zinc.org
The Importance of Zinc

Zinc – vital for taste, smell and appetite
Zinc activates areas of the brain that receive and process information from taste and smell sensors. Levels of zinc in plasma and zinc’s effect on other nutrients, like copper and manganese, influence appetite and taste preference. Zinc is also used in the treatment of anorexia.

Zinc – vital for skin, hair and nails
Zinc accelerates the renewal of the skin cells. Zinc creams are used for babies to soothe diaper rash and to heal cuts and wounds. Zinc has also proven effective in treating acne, a problem that affects especially adolescents, and zinc has been reported to have a positive effect on psoriasis and neurodermitis.

Zinc is also used as an anti-inflammatory agent and can help soothe the skin tissue, particularly in cases of poison ivy, sunburn, blisters and certain gum diseases.

Zinc is important for healthy hair. Insufficient zinc levels may result in loss of hair, hair that looks thin and dull and that goes grey early. There are also a number of shampoos which contain zinc to help prevent dandruff.

Zinc – vital for vision
High concentrations of zinc are found in the retina. With age the retinal zinc declines which seems to play a role in the development of age-related macular degeneration (AMD), which leads to partial or complete loss of vision. Zinc may also protect from night blindness and prevent the development of cataracts.

http://www.zinc.org