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# *B for a Better Life*

The **B vitamins** are a family of water soluble vitamins which play important roles in cell metabolism. There are 8 vitamins belonging to this group:

- **Thiamin**
- **Riboflavin**
- **Niacin**
- **Pantothenic Acid,**
- **Vitamin B6**
- **Biotin**
- **Folic Acid**
- **and Vitamin B12**

Among these, the most important are vitamins **B6** and **B12**. Deficiencies in either of these vitamins could lead to anemia, which is a health problem defined by a lower than average hemoglobin count. Hemoglobin is the protein in red blood cells which carries oxygen to other



parts of the body, and is vital to our health. The most common symptoms of vitamin-deficient anemia include: fatigue, weakness, shortness of breath, and lightheadedness. **A.K.A. things you wouldn't want to come across while driving!**

There are other ways these two vitamins are helpful. An increase in **B6** has been shown to **help prevent non-estrogen-related breast cancer, assist in the production of serotonin** (a mood enhancer) and **melatonin** (a chemical which regulates sleep), and **improve cardiovascular health by decreasing levels of homocysteine.**

Here's how much B12 you're supposed to consume per day:

infants 0-6 months

0.4 mcg

infants 7-12 months

0.5 mcg

toddlers 1-3 years

0.9 mcg

children 4-8 years

1.2mcg

children 9-13 years

1.8 mcg

people age 14 and older

2.4 mcg

for adult and adolescent pregnant females

2.6 mcg

and for adult and adolescent lactating females

2.8mcg

**B12** on the other hand, has been shown to assist with the production of myelin to promote healthy nerve function, and help with the creation of energy.

Another important **B** vitamin, known for the fact that it supports over 200 chemical reactions in the body, is **niacin** (or vitamin **B3**). Niacin boosts levels of 'good' cholesterol in the body, and lowers triglycerides and 'bad' cholesterol. It's shown to lower the risk of heart attack due to this, as well as the fact that it reduces hardening of the arteries. Niacin may even lower the risk of other diseases such as Alzheimer's and osteoporosis, though there are fewer studies done on this than on its cardiovascular benefits.



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## Tips for Getting Enough B vitamins on a Vegetarian or Low-Meat Diet

- The only way to get B12 without any animal products is to buy fortified cereal or soy based meat substitutes. They often provide more than 100 percent of your B-12 requirements.
- Egg yolks contain B12, but you'll need to eat about 4 whole large eggs to meet your requirement.
- Nuts and seeds are both high in B6, so carry a bag of them around for snacking.
- If you're allergic to nuts, spinach or other leafy greens also contain the B vitamins. Eat them with something high in vitamin C, so that you'll be able to digest them properly.



Vitamin **B12** is only found naturally in animal products, but is often used in the making of fortified cereals, and soy based meat substitutes. The top sources of vitamin **B12** include: **eggs, milk, cheese, poultry, and red meat.**

**B6** is found in **all nuts and seeds, most types of fish, turkey, chicken, dried fruit, and spinach.**

Good sources of **niacin** include: **fish, liver, pork, chicken, peanuts, mushrooms, green peas, avocados, and brown rice.**