



By Carey Rossi

B vitamins

FATIGUED? SLUGGISH? YOU MAY NOT BE GETTING YOUR B VITAMINS. IF YOU'RE A WOMAN OF CHILD-BEARING AGE, PREGNANT, OVER 50, A VEGETARIAN OR AT RISK FOR HEART DISEASE, YOU MAY BENEFIT FROM B-VITAMIN SUPPLEMENTATION, SAYS LAURA WROBLEWSKI, A REGISTERED DIETITIAN WITH THE SENSIBLE NUTRITION CONNECTION IN HINGHAM, MASSACHUSETTS.

VITAMIN	FOOD SOURCES	USES	RECOMMENDED INTAKE (for adults)	NOTES AND PRECAUTIONS
B₁ or THIAMIN	Yeast, peas, beans and grains	Assists nervous system	1–1.2 mg; 1.4 mg for pregnant women	Deficiency is common in alcoholics and those who use diuretics.
B₂ or RIBOFLAVIN	Many vegetables and nuts	Maintains vision and skin	1–1.3 mg; 1.4 mg for pregnant women; 1.6 mg for lactating women	None
B₃ or NIACIN	Enriched white flour, peanuts, fish and meat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improves cholesterol • Helps metabolize carbohydrates • Helps treat leg cramps triggered by hardening arteries • Helps fight numbing effects of Raynaud's disease 	14–16 mg; 18 mg for pregnant women; 17 mg for lactating women	Upper limit is 35 mg; include fortified foods if choosing a supplement amount. High doses can cause liver injury; take only under medical supervision.
B₅ or PANTOTHENIC ACID	Liver, yeast and salmon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production of energy, hormones and neurotransmitters 	5 mg; 6 mg for pregnant women; 7 mg for lactating women	Deficiency is not common except in alcoholics.
B₆ or PYRIDOXINE HYDROCHLORIDE	Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, white potatoes and other starchy vegetables, non-citrus fruits, fortified cereals and soy products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lowers risk of heart disease • Maintains immune and nervous systems • Therapeutic dosages reduce morning sickness • Metabolizes amino acids and glycogen (sugar) 	1.3–1.7 mg; 1.9 mg for pregnant women; 2 mg for lactating women	Upper limit is 100 mg; overdoing can cause nerve and skin damage.
B₁₂ or CYANOCOBALAMIN	Found in meat, fish and poultry products; not found in plant foods	Lowers risk of heart disease; essential for maintenance of nervous system and production of energy	2.4 mcg; 2.6 mcg for pregnant women; 2.8 mcg for lactating women	Deficiency can cause anemia, nerve damage, low sperm count; may occur in older people, vegetarians, alcoholics, drug abusers, and those recovering from surgery, burns or cancers of the digestive system.
FOLIC ACID	Dark leafy green vegetables, oranges and fortified foods	Lowers risk of heart disease and helps prevent birth defects of the spinal cord	RDA: 400 mcg; vital for all women of child-bearing age. RDA is based on food consumption; supplements are twice as likely to be absorbed so take only 200 mg.	Upper limit is 1,000 mcg and refers only to supplements and fortified foods. Excessive doses can cause kidney damage and make it difficult to diagnose B ₁₂ deficiencies.
Biotin	Oatmeal, egg yolks, organ meats, bananas, peanuts and brewer's yeast	Metabolism of nutrients	30 mcg; 35 mcg for breast-feeding women	Supplemental biotin may interfere with anti-seizure medication. □



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