

# Guide to Vitamins

For more information on which vitamins you need and how to get them, visit The National Institutes of Health Office of Dietary Supplements at <http://ods.od.nih.gov>



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## VITAMIN A

Protects your vision and promotes the growth of body cells and tissues. Helps keep your skin healthy and protects the tissues in your mouth, stomach, intestines and respiratory system. Aids in producing white blood cells which help your body destroy bacteria and viruses. Although unusual in developed countries, vitamin A deficiency can cause night blindness, dry & flaky skin and make you prone to infections. **Where to get it:** Liver, carrots, fortified milk, spinach, cantalope, eggs, dark green and yellow fruits and vegetables



## VITAMIN B6

Vitamin B6 helps your body process proteins and is essential for creating hemoglobin which carries oxygen to your tissues and organs. A lack of B6 can cause anemia. B6 is also important to your immune system and maintains the health of the organs that make white blood cells which help stave off infection. Also helps maintain the right blood glucose levels. **Where to get it:** Fortified cereal, potatoes, bananas, garbanzo beans, chicken, fish (trout, salmon and tuna), oatmeal, pork, beef and sunflower seeds



## VITAMIN B1 (THIAMINE)

Helps your body produce energy from the carbohydrates you eat. B1 also helps regulate your appetite and is critical to your nervous system. Thiamine (B1) deficiency – called beriberi – is rare, although people who drink alcohol in excess are often deficient in B1 and can suffer fatigue, nerve damage, muscle weakness and memory loss. **Where to get it:** Whole and enriched grains, fortified



## VITAMIN B3 (NIACIN)

Niacin helps your body use sugars and fatty acids to produce energy. It also helps your digestive and nervous systems function. While a niacin deficiency can cause digestive problems, disorientation and inflamed skin, too much niacin (which usually occurs from using supplements) can cause liver damage, stomach ulcers, high blood sugar and red, flushed skin. Be aware that niacin can be found in several prescription cholesterol medications.



## VITAMIN C

Ah - the magical vitamin C. Does it prevent colds or not? While that question is still debated in medical circles, there's no doubt that vitamin C is a powerful antioxidant that helps grow tissue, is essential to the healing of wounds and may even contribute to the prevention of cancer, heart disease and arthritis. Your body does not manufacture vitamin C and can't store it so it's important to make sure you get plenty every day. **Where to get it:** Citrus fruits – of course, but more surprising, green and red peppers are the best source – also berries and tomatoes.



## VITAMIN D

The sunshine vitamin – D is produced when your skin is exposed to ultraviolet rays of the sun. But don't chuck your sunscreen just yet – you only need 10-15 minutes of unprotected exposure about twice a week to get your fill. Vitamin D deficiency is becoming more common in developed countries (too much time indoors?) and is critical to helping your body absorb the calcium needed to make strong bones, staving off osteoporosis. **Where to get it:** Besides the sun, milk, cheese, fortified cereals and salmon & sardines.



## VITAMIN B12

Works with folate to make red blood cells and is needed to make DNA. Too little B12 can mean anemia, fatigue, sensitive skin and neurological damage. Because B12 sticks to the protein in the food we eat, vegans are prone to developing B12 deficiencies and the infants of strict vegetarian mothers are at particular risk. Some people also have an intestinal disorder that prevents the absorption of B12. **Where to get it:** Fish, meat, poultry, eggs, milk and dairy products. Also in fortified cereals.



## ZINC

Zinc is needed for your immune system to work properly. It also plays a role in digestion, cell growth and healing wounds. Interestingly, zinc is also critical to your senses of smell and taste. Symptoms of zinc deficiency include poor appetite, slow healing wounds, hair loss and problems with taste or smell. But use supplements carefully - too much zinc can cause abdominal problems – usually within 3-10 hours of taking a supplement. **Where to get it:** Beef, pork and lamb, dark meat of chicken, peanuts and legumes.