



Vitamin B

Top nutrients for women

Why is vitamin B important for women?

Vitamin B is a collection of eight nutrients including vitamin B1, B2, B3, B5, B6, B7, B9 and B12. Together they're called 'the B-group vitamins'. They can also be taken as a 'vitamin B complex' supplement.

Each vitamin in the group has an important part to play in your health. They help your body to function, and support your cells, energy levels and brain health. Some of them even work together to keep you healthy.

Vitamins B5 and B6, for example, are involved in making energy from the food you eat. And vitamin B9 (also known as 'folate') works closely with vitamin B12 to build cells.

Folate is particularly important for women just before pregnancy and in the first three months of pregnancy. During this time, folate helps to reduce the risk of brain and spinal problems in the unborn baby.



Where can I find vitamin B?

The B-group vitamins are often found together in the same food. Many of them are found in animal-based protein foods such as chicken, fish, meat, eggs and dairy products. Others are found in whole grains, wholewheat bread, tofu, legumes (e.g. chickpeas, beans), green leafy vegetables and nuts.



How can I get enough vitamin B?

Eating a wide variety of healthy, unprocessed foods every day can help you get enough vitamin B. Think vegetables, whole grains, legumes, dairy, meat, chicken and fish.

Examples of vitamin B-rich snacks include:

- wholegrain crackers with beetroot hummus
- a handful of unroasted or lightly roasted nuts – pecans are a rich source of vitamin B
- wholegrain toast with a boiled egg or avocado and Vegemite.

Examples of vitamin B-rich meals include:

- chilli con carne made with minced beef or kidney beans and your favourite vegetables, served with quinoa or brown rice
- soba noodle stir-fry with tofu, edamame beans, carrots and zucchini
- grilled salmon with green pesto and roasted sweet potato
- roast vegetable salad with baby spinach and boiled eggs, topped with pecans.

If you follow a vegan, vegetarian or plant-based diet, it's important to pay extra attention to vitamin B. It's easy to fall short of vitamin B12, for example, because it occurs mainly in animal-based foods. Ask your doctor for more information.



If you're pregnant or planning to become pregnant, it's recommended you take a folate (or folic acid) supplement daily. Take the supplements one month before trying to conceive (or as soon as you find out you're pregnant) until three months into your pregnancy. Choose a supplement that also has B-group vitamins, as they can help folate to work properly. Read our folate fact sheet to learn more (see link below).

Also be aware that alcohol and some medicines (e.g. blood pressure or cholesterol medicines) can lower your vitamin B levels. Speak to your doctor if you're worried.

Still confused about healthy eating?

To help simplify the complicated, we've created seven more fact sheets on these important nutrients for women:

- Calcium
- Folate
- Iodine
- Iron
- Magnesium
- Protein
- Vitamin D

Get the fact sheets at

jeanhailes.org.au/resources/fact-sheets

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Disclaimer: This information does not replace medical advice. If you are worried about your health, talk to your doctor or healthcare team.

We write health information for people with diverse backgrounds, experiences and identities. We use the term 'women', but we acknowledge that this term is not inclusive of all people who may use our content.

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