

Facts about Vitamin B₆¹

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Why do we need vitamin B₆?#

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Vitamin B₆ is needed to break down the protein we eat. Our bodies also use vitamin B₆ to make important body proteins. This vitamin (also called pyridoxine) helps our muscles use energy. It also helps make brain chemicals that tell the systems in our bodies what to do.



Vitamin B₆ deficiency is rare because this vitamin is found in many foods. However, use of certain medications like levodopa or isoniazid can cause a deficiency. Also, people who eat very high-protein diets may have a higher requirement for vitamin B₆.

How much vitamin B₆ do we need?

The following table lists recommended daily intakes of vitamin B₆. Older adults need slightly more vitamin B₆ in their diets. Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding also have higher vitamin B₆ needs.

Life Stage	Amount (mg/day)
Adults, ages 19-50	1.3
Men, ages 51+	1.7
Women, ages 51+	1.5
Pregnancy	1.9
Lactation	2.0
mg = milligrams of vitamin B ₆	

What happens if we don't get enough vitamin B₆?

People who don't get enough vitamin B₆ may have skin problems or anemia. They may experience confusion, depression, and convulsions. The immune system can be affected, making it harder to fight disease.

1. This document is FCS8700, one of a series of the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: July 2006. Please visit the EDIS Web site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
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How can we get enough vitamin B₆?

One of the best sources of vitamin B₆ in the U.S. diet is fortified ready-to-eat cereal. Look for the word “pyridoxine” in the ingredient list on the cereal label to see if vitamin B₆ has been added.

Other rich sources of vitamin B₆ are beef liver, other organ meats, and fortified soy-based meat substitutes. Good sources are meat, fish, and poultry, and starchy vegetables such as potatoes, plantains, and winter squash.



Here are some foods and the amount of vitamin B₆ they contain:

Food	Vitamin B ₆ (mg/serving)
Fortified cereal, 1 cup	1.0
Beef liver, cooked, 3 oz	0.9
Banana, 1 medium	0.5
Chicken breast, cooked, 3 oz	0.5
Potato, baked, with skin, 1 medium	0.5
Beef, top round, cooked, 3 oz	0.4
Plantain, cooked, slices, 1 cup	0.4
Pork loin, cooked, 3 oz	0.3
Salmon, cooked, 3 oz	0.2
oz = ounce mg = milligrams	

What about supplements?

Most people get plenty of vitamin B₆ in their diets, so supplements usually are not needed. Vitamin B₆ is included in most multivitamin supplements. Adequate B₆ intake may reduce heart disease risk.



How much is too much?

No problems are known from eating large amounts of vitamin B₆ in foods. However, taking large doses of vitamin B₆ in supplements can cause nerve damage. This can be so severe that walking is impossible. Nerve damage from excess vitamin B₆ can be permanent. If you take a supplement, do not take more than 100 to 150% of the Daily Value for vitamin B₆ per day. **Keep your total vitamin B₆ intake less than 100 mg/day from food and supplements combined.**

Where can I get more information?

The Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) agent at your county Extension office may have more written information and nutrition classes for you to attend. Also, a registered dietitian (RD) can provide reliable information to you.

Reliable nutrition information may be found on the Internet at the following sites:

- <http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu>
- <http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic>
- <http://www.nutrition.gov>

