

The importance
OF
B VITAMINS

B Vitamins for Anxiety, Depression and Stress

The ability of B vitamins to help those who are plagued with the symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression has been well documented.

One study found a significant decrease in the experience of workplace stress after 90-days supplementation of a B complex vitamin.

Another study found evidence that B group vitamin supplementation (either alone or with a multivitamin) may also benefit mood in healthy and at-risk individuals.

In regards to depression, one study found that low levels of folate (B9) and low levels of vitamin B12 have been found in studies of depressed people, and an association between depression and low levels of B9 and B12 has been found in studies of the general population.

The following are some of the most important B vitamins, with details of how they can help overcome the damaging symptoms of stress, anxiety and/or depression.

Vitamin B1 - Thiamine

In a study conducted on young Welsh women, researchers determined that there is a significant association between having low levels of thiamine and feeling less composed and more depressed.

After taking vitamin B1 supplements for 90 days these Welsh women experienced significant improvement in their mood, simultaneous with the increase of thiamine levels in their bodies.

The researchers at the University of Wales in Swansea said that 6% of the study participants had thiamine levels that were so low that their mood had drastically been affected. Happily for them, after thiamine supplementation their mood improved.

Thiamine or vitamin B1 is a water-based vitamin which is essential for keeping a person's mental health in tip top shape. Besides stabilizing mood, thiamine also helps improve memory and ability to concentrate.

Vitamin B2 - Riboflavin

Another of the major B vitamins, riboflavin, is highly touted for its ability to help people cope better with fatigue and any other effects of stress.

One of the most common consequences of excessive stress are migraines or headaches. A great benefit of riboflavin is that if taken in adequate doses it may help reduce the frequency of headaches and to prevent the onset of migraine.

It is also beneficial for improving a person's mood especially when it is taken together with vitamin B6.

Another consequence of too much stress is the manifestation of poor skin health. Exposure to prolonged stress will also lead to brittle nails and dry hair.

Riboflavin will serve as your best friend during these times as it will shield your hair, nails and skin against the damaging effects of stress especially when it is taken with another B vitamin called biotin.

Riboflavin is also a powerful antioxidant.

Continuing studies support what many experts have previously claimed, being that oxidative stress [an imbalance between the production of free radicals (unstable atoms) and antioxidants which causes cell damage] is one of the major contributors to the development of many chronic diseases.

With regular intake of riboflavin, the damaging effects of oxidative stress could be reduced or kept at bay.

Vitamin B3 - Niacin

Niacin has been promoted for its ability to induce sleep and relaxation through its “flushing” effect, which is a method popularized by Abram Hoffer, M.D.

Dr. Hoffer’s experience regarding the use of niacin for helping people with anxiety and depression started in the 1950s.

He harnessed the ability of niacin to promote flushing in order to provide a natural tranquilizer effect that relaxes people who are plagued with depression.

The flushing effect may last up to thirty minutes and though it may feel uncomfortable it is totally harmless. This effect is experienced after taking niacin supplements, doses of which may be 50mg per day and more depending on each person.

Niacin was used in conjunction with vitamin C as part of Dr. Hoffer’s routine for treating depression and anxiety in his patients.

The niacin flushing effect occurs as a result of the dilation of blood vessels which causes a warming sensation that makes the person’s skin look pinkish or blushing.

Some people may find this irritating or disconcerting at first but are usually quick to accept this inconvenience for the benefits received.

Following the procedure, a feeling of calmness is experienced making it easier for an individual to more completely relax and fall asleep.

Aside from its natural tranquilizer effect, niacin is also used to flush out toxins in the body. This will then improve a person’s overall health and further help stave off the harmful effects of stress.

The positive results that Dr. Hoffer achieved in treating depressed individuals strongly implies that a deficiency of vitamin B3 may be linked to the development of depression and anxiety.

Vitamin B5 – Pantothenic Acid

There is sufficient scientific evidence to prove that supplementation of pantothenic acid helps enhance adrenal gland functioning.

Vitamin B5 is a key player in the production of Coenzyme A. This very important constituent is needed for the adrenals to be able to synthesize those hormones that the body needs to produce to respond properly to stress.

Some experts claim that Vitamin B5 in the pantethine form works more efficiently in producing coenzyme A than its pantothenic acid form.

According to a study published in *Alternative Medicine Review*, vitamin B5 is essential for the prevention of excess cortisol secretion which is a common occurrence among individuals during acute stress.

When the body does not have adequate pantothenic acid an individual becomes increasingly prone to fatigue, headache and nausea – a few of the many symptoms that stressed individuals often complain about.

Vitamin B5 is obtained from a wide variety of food sources, both animal and vegetable. Its availability is greatly reduced in processed foods.

A healthy diet should supply adequate amounts, however for those who live a fast-food lifestyle, supplementation may be necessary.

Vitamin B6 - Pyridoxine

Like other B vitamins, pyridoxine is also known as an anti-stress vitamin which is able to improve the resilience and functioning of the immune system.

It aids in the production of brain chemicals such as serotonin, which is also known as the “feel-good” neurochemical.

It further plays a role in keeping hormonal levels in balance.

Studies show that having low levels of serotonin may lead to increased sensitivity of the sympathetic nervous system, resulting in a person’s increased vulnerability to stress.

Research has shown that people who are suffering from depression have low levels of pyridoxine in their body. There is increasing evidence that vitamin B6 deficiency leads to a higher risk of stress and anxiety.

A study was conducted among bereaved men, in which researchers found out that those with low pyridoxine levels in the body were more distressed and their levels of anxiety were also higher, as compared to those bereaved individuals who had higher levels of pyridoxine in their system.

Pyridoxine is also referred to by many experts as a “women’s vitamin” because it provides relief from the symptoms of premenstrual syndrome.

Regular intake of this vitamin will therefore mean reduced stress in more than one area for women.

Other symptoms of vitamin B6 deficiency may include irritability, nervousness, memory problems and muscle weakness.

Regular intake of vitamin B6 in conjunction with niacinamide will also be beneficial in improving the symptoms of insomnia and other sleep problems that afflict stressed individuals.

Vitamin B7 - Biotin

Exposure to high levels of stress has been associated with telogen effluvium in which large numbers of hair follicles fall into a resting phase.

As a result, a person will notice more than usual amounts of their hair falling out when they are simply combing or washing their hair.

Severe stress has also been known to cause alopecia areata. This is a condition in which an individual's immune system attacks a person's hair follicles resulting in gradual hair loss.

If you notice your nails becoming brittle, then stress could be one of the things that is causing it. A benefit of biotin is that it can also help strengthen your nails, especially when stress is the cause.

Several small-scale studies have proven the efficiency of biotin in helping individuals achieve improved nail strength. One study showed 25% improvement in nail thickness while reducing the splitting tendency of the nails through regular biotin supplementation.

Results of another clinical trial showed that biotin supplementation helped 91% of study participants achieve better nail strength.

Symptoms of stress may include skin problems such as acne, dermatitis, rashes, psoriasis and itchiness. Stress will also deplete the body of its needed nutrients.

When the body's reservoir of biotin is depleted due to chronic stress, skin health can be negatively affected.

The health of the skin's surface is one big indicator that the skin is not well nourished. This is also a huge sign that a person is deficient in Biotin.

Vitamin B9 - Folate

Vitamin B9 is famous for its ability to help pregnant women prevent their unborn babies from having birth defects. However, not many people realize that folate is also a natural provider of immune system power. This makes it very important for people who are constantly struggling with the crippling effects of excessive stress.

With an adequate vitamin B9 intake, you will not only improve your body's ability to cope with stress but it could also help to prevent the onset of colon, cervix and lung cancer, ulcerative colitis, heart disease and stroke.

Taking folate on a regular basis may improve nerve and brain functions. This is especially important and hard to achieve during periods of increased stress.

Another benefit of taking folate is the enhancement of the body's reservoir of energy, which again is challenged during stressful events.

Stress is known to speed up the process of aging and its effects. Folate supplementation may help reduce your risk of acquiring Alzheimer's disease, dementia, bone fractures, memory decline and other illnesses that are usually considered to be consistent with aging.

Vitamin B12 - Cobalamin

A deficiency in B 12 may contribute to Alzheimer's disease, anxiety, depression and cardiovascular diseases.

The amount needed per day is tiny compared to most vitamins, but the effects of inadequate intake are profound and dangerous, even deadly.

Lower levels of deficiency can cause symptoms such as blurred vision, memory problems, confusion and personality changes, while extreme deficiency can lead to anaemia, nervous system damage and coma.

Vitamin B12 is unique among vitamins. It contains cobalt and has been termed "cobalamin". Whereas most other vitamins can be sourced from plant-based foods or even the sun, B12 is available almost entirely only from animal-derived products, including meat, dairy, eggs, fish and shellfish.

While eggs and dairy will provide for vegetarians, vegans are at risk of deficiency unless they use supplements or fortified products.

Since overcoming the damaging effects of stress requires a healthy mind and body, those who are constantly stressed should ensure adequate regular intake of this vitamin.

Vitamin B12 works hand in hand with folate in the process of synthesizing red blood cells and DNA. This vitamin is also responsible for myelin sheath production.

The myelin sheath is located around the nerves and serves as the insulation that protects the nerves in the nervous system.

As such, B12 is also heavily involved in the proper conduction of the brain's nerve impulses.

Adequate vitamin B12 will better help your system fight against weakness, fatigue, lethargy and other mental problems associated with prolonged exposure to stress.

The Whole Vitamin B Group

As discussed above, individual B vitamins play a vital role in helping both mind and body deal with the destructive consequences of stress, both acute and chronic.

In unison, the B group of vitamins provides critical and matchless support to the body's stress response and recovery systems. In times of stress the B vitamins are rapidly depleted in large amounts, as they are on the front line during the stress response, and just as importantly, during the resolution phase.

A balanced diet should probably provide adequate quantities of B vitamins for a balanced lifestyle. The truth is that most people today do not live a balanced lifestyle.

Our modern lives are usually a combination of excess chronic stress, combined with unhealthy dietary choices, often brought on by the same stress. It is highly likely that inadequate intake of some or all B vitamins exists in many households.

If improvements to diet are impractical or unlikely, supplementation will likely be of huge benefit.

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