



Glynis Barber

THE BEAUTY OF B VITS

Or holistic guru looks into why these nutrients are so vital to our health

I've always associated B vitamins with stress.

During difficult times of life, pop a B vit to help you feel better. Now that's no mean feat, but recent research is showing that B vitamins are much more than that. They are in fact vital to maintaining cognitive abilities, in particular as we age, and can offer remarkable protection.

The following symptoms could be a sign that you're lacking in this essential vitamin: forgetfulness, mental fog, mood swings, insomnia, fatigue, dry skin, headaches, loss of muscle mass and joint pain.

To complicate things, there are eight key B vitamins and you could be running low on just one of them to put your whole system out of joint. It is easily done because they are plentiful in meat, fish, dairy and whole grains but when these foods are processed their potency is hugely diminished. They are also affected by alcohol, excessive coffee-drinking, gut problems and age. Vegans and vegetarians are also at risk of low B vitamin levels, too.

Added to this, B vitamins don't absorb well, in particular vitamin B12, which is also known as the 'energy vitamin'. In fact, lots of my friends will go for

B12 shots when they're exhausted from work or feeling below par. Here's the low-down on what they are and why we need them:

- **Thiamine (B1)** – vital for the metabolism of fats and carbohydrates, and important for the nervous system and muscles
- **Riboflavin (B2)** – essential for muscle growth and healthy skin and eyes
- **Niacin (B3)** – needed for a healthy nervous system, skin, nails and GI function
- **Pantothenic Acid (B5)** – important for sex hormones, co-enzymes and energy metabolism
- **Pyridoxine (B6)** – needed for the synthesis of neurotransmitters
- **Biotin (B7)** – supports digestion, skin, hair and cellular health
- **Folate (B9)** – required for the production of red blood cells in bone marrow

These vitamins play a very important role in cognitive function, the decline of which can lead to the development of dementia, including Alzheimer's. Another important function of B vitamins is the suppression of homocysteine, high levels of which can be a sign of brain degeneration. In fact, high levels of this is now considered to be a risk factor for the development of dementia.

The good news is that these quite astonishing vitamins can offer the chance to protect the brain and even help towards reversing degeneration in some cases. What's not to love?

5 B VIT FACTS:

- 1** Vitamins B6, B9 and B12 in particular, are important for the protection against dementia and Alzheimer's.
- 2** Folate, B6 and B12 have been shown to lower blood levels of homocysteine, thereby decreasing brain shrinkage by a significant amount.
- 3** By avoiding vitamin B deficiency in the first place, you can help to minimise age-related brain atrophy and cognitive decline.
- 4** Vegans who consume no animal products could be at risk of B12 deficiency and would therefore benefit from supplementation.
- 5** Niacin has been shown to help in the treatment of anxiety, OCD, ADD and depression.



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