



# What are B-Vitamins?



Happy\_lark/iStock/Getty Images Plus/Getty Images

There are eight well known B-vitamins that play a role in the body. They support metabolism and contribute to the body's ability to produce energy. Several of the B-vitamins have additional functions as well:

## **Vitamin B6:**

Alternatively known as pyridoxine, vitamin B6 helps to produce insulin, fight infection and create non-essential amino acids (the building blocks of protein). Beans, chicken, banana, baked potato, pork, fish, nuts and fortified breakfast cereals all contain vitamin B6.

## **Folate**

Also known as folic acid, folate is particularly important during pregnancy. Consuming adequate amounts helps to reduce the risk of spine and brain deformities (known as neural tube defects).

Sources of folate include many fruits and vegetables — including beans, oranges, avocado and spinach – as well as fortified grains.

## **Vitamin B12**

Cobalamin, or vitamin B12, plays an important role in creating new red blood cells and a deficiency could result in anemia. It is present in animal products such as milk, yogurt and cheese, meat, fish, poultry and eggs. Many grains and cereals are also fortified with vitamin B12 and are an important source of this vitamin for vegetarians and vegans. Although, a vitamin B12 supplement may also be needed.

These B-vitamins are more commonly known by their names than by their numbers, but all are widely available in a variety of foods and deficiency is relatively uncommon in the United States:

- **Thiamin:** Pork, peas, whole-grain and enriched-grain products including bread, rice, pasta, tortillas and fortified cereals.
- **Riboflavin:** Cheese, yogurt, enriched grains, lean meats, eggs, almonds and leafy green vegetables.
- **Niacin:** High-protein foods such as peanut butter, beef, poultry and fish, as well as enriched and fortified grain products
- **Pantothenic Acid:** Yogurt, sweet potato, milk, avocado, corn, eggs and beans.
- **Biotin:** Eggs, peanuts, fish, sweet potato and almonds.