

## Vitamin B<sub>6</sub>

### Why We Need It

Vitamin B<sub>6</sub>, also called pyridoxine, is a water-soluble vitamin needed to break down the protein we eat. In addition, our bodies use vitamin B<sub>6</sub> to make important body proteins. This vitamin helps our muscles use energy, and it helps make brain chemicals that tell the body's systems what to do.

### Recommended Daily Intakes of Vitamin B<sub>6</sub>

	Age	Vitamin B <sub>6</sub> (mg/day)
<b>Infants</b>	birth–6 months	0.1
	6 months–1 year	0.3
<b>Children</b>	1–3 years	0.5
	4–8 years	0.6
<b>Males</b>	9–13 years	1.0
	14-50 years	1.3
	51 years and over	1.7
<b>Females</b>	9–13 years	1.0
	14-18 years	1.2
	19-50 years	1.3
	51 years and over	1.5
	pregnant	1.9
	breastfeeding	2.0

mg = milligrams

**Source:** adapted from the Dietary Reference Intakes series, National Academies Press. Copyright 1997, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2004, by the National Academies of Sciences.

Note that older adults and women who are pregnant or breastfeeding need slightly more of this vitamin in their diets.

### Sources

Fortified ready-to-eat cereal is one of the best sources of vitamin B<sub>6</sub> in the U.S. diet. If vitamin B<sub>6</sub> has been added to cereal, the word “pyridoxine” will be in the ingredient list on the label.

Other rich sources of vitamin B<sub>6</sub> 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.

### Sources of Vitamin B<sub>6</sub>

Food	Vitamin B <sub>6</sub> (mg per serving)
<b>fortified cereal, 1 cup</b>	1.0
<b>beef liver, cooked, 3 oz</b>	0.9
<b>banana, 1 medium</b>	0.5
<b>chicken breast, cooked, 3 oz</b>	0.5
<b>potato, baked, with skin, 1 medium</b>	0.5
<b>beef, top round, cooked, 3 oz</b>	0.4
<b>plantain, cooked, slices, 1 cup</b>	0.4
<b>pork loin, cooked, 3 oz</b>	0.3
<b>salmon, cooked, 3 oz</b>	0.2
mg = milligrams oz = ounces	

### If We Don't Get Enough

People who don't get enough vitamin B<sub>6</sub> may develop skin problems or anemia, experience confusion, depression, and convulsions. The immune system can be affected, making it harder to fight disease.

Since this vitamin is found in many foods, vitamin B<sub>6</sub> deficiency is rare. However, use of certain medications like levodopa or isoniazid can cause a deficiency. People who eat very high-protein diets may have a higher requirement for vitamin B<sub>6</sub>.

## Supplements

Supplements usually are not needed, because most people get plenty of vitamin B<sub>6</sub> in their diets. Vitamin B<sub>6</sub> is included in most multivitamin supplements. Heart attack risk may be reduced by getting adequate B<sub>6</sub> intake.

## High Doses

There are no known problems from eating large amounts of vitamin B<sub>6</sub> in foods. However, taking large doses in supplements for long periods of time can result in nerve damage. This nerve damage can be permanent and may be so severe that walking becomes impossible.

If you take a supplement, do not take more than 100 to 150% of the Daily Value for vitamin B<sub>6</sub> per day. Keep your total vitamin B<sub>6</sub> intake less than 100 mg/day from food and supplements combined.

## For 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, your doctor, health care provider, or a registered dietitian (RD) can provide reliable information.

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

<http://hgic.clemson.edu>

<http://virtual.clemson.edu/groups/NIRC/>

<http://www.eatright.org>

<http://www.nutrition.gov>

<http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic>

### Sources:

1. Kendall, Anne. University of Florida Extension. *Facts About Vitamin B<sub>6</sub>*. FCS8700. July 2006.

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publications.html>

2. National Academies of Sciences. National Academies Press. *Dietary Reference Intakes series*. 2004.

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