

## The Importance Of Vitamins

Although the menopause is a natural stage that women experience, symptoms can be uncomfortable. There are steps you can take to potentially reduce them, including taking vitamin supplements. These may help with several symptoms, from flushes, low energy, fatigue and sleep.

It is important to note that some women will benefit from using supplements more than others. It is also important to note that you won't necessarily need all of these it is person and symptom dependant!

### B6 & B12

B6 - Needed for mood, energy and sleep. May decrease sweats.

B12 - Needed for energy, cognition and memory.

These help support cognitive function. It has been suggested that getting enough of these B vitamins may also help lower the risk of developing dementia over time, whether or not you are experiencing menopause. B vitamins also play an important role in the creation and activation of oestrogen in the body. B6 is a water-soluble vitamin found in many foods so often not necessary to be taken as a tablet supplement. Some of the foods it can be found in include: Beef liver, tuna, salmon, fortified cereals, chick peas, poultry, leafy greens, potatoes and starchy vegetables, bananas and oranges. Vitamin B12 is also a water-soluble vitamin. It is involved in cell metabolism, red blood cell formation, nerve function and brain development. As with B6 B12 can also be found in many foods and not necessarily needed to be taken as a supplement. B12 can be found in poultry, meat, fish, dairy and eggs.

### Vitamin D

Vitamin D is unique in that it functions more like a hormone than a vitamin. It communicates with other hormones, making it especially essential to help balance hormone levels during menopause. Having a vitamin D deficiency combined with the menopausal transition is associated with low mood, lack of energy and bone pains.

We get vitamin D from the sun, supplements, and a few foods. Patients with higher vitamin D levels have expressed they had fewer hot flashes and other symptoms than women with lower levels. Vitamin D can also protect against depletion of serotonin, which plays a role in regulating body heat, as well as showing positive effects on low mood and cognitive performance.

Since mood symptoms are common in the menopause years, anything that minimises your mood fluctuations is worth your attention. If you suffer from seasonal affective disorder (SAD) and notice your mood being low during the winter season, you may want to boost your vitamin D intake during those darker months.

Vitamin D also helps to slow down the decrease in bone density and to absorb calcium to strengthen your muscles, teeth and bones. Foods naturally rich in vitamin D include oily fish, like herring, salmon, sardines and mackerel, egg yolks and raw chanterelle mushrooms. Some foods have vitamin D added to them, such as certain bread, yoghurts, orange juice, breakfast cereals, soy and almond milks and yoghurts. This is normally shown on the packaging. Food alone doesn't usually provide enough vitamin D so exposing your skin to sunlight is more effective during summer. In the UK it can still be difficult to get enough vitamin D from sunlight, especially in winter. The NHS recommends that everyone should consider taking a supplement of vitamin D, especially children, peri menopausal and menopausal women.

## Magnesium

Magnesium may reduce unwanted side effects of menopause, such as difficulty sleeping. It also supports low mood and anxiety while supporting heart health.

The best types for menopause are citrate and L-threonate. Citrate is a good all-rounder, and L-threonate is particularly good for brain function, so if brain fog is an issue for you, go for that.

## Zinc

Zinc is essential to the synthesis and action of insulin. You need insulin to help move glucose around the body to your brain, liver and muscles especially. If you have brain fog, or your muscles are more sore than usual after exercise, then check your zinc intake!

Zinc regulates women's cycles and reduces inflammation. It can also affect sexual function. You can increase your Zinc intake by eating red meat, poultry and fish.

## Vitamin A

Vitamin A is the name for a group of compounds called retinoids. Vitamin A, also known as retinol, is stored in your liver, too much may be toxic. You get preformed vitamin A when you eat animal products, fortified foods, or when you take vitamin A supplements. You also get vitamin A when you eat fruits and vegetables rich in beta-carotene. Your body converts beta-carotene into vitamin A as needed.

Vitamin A is obtained from beta-carotene doesn't appear to increase bone fracture risk. It may help maintain bone health after menopause. You can help get the vitamin A you need from beta carotene by eating orange and yellow fruits and vegetables.

## Iron

Iron is needed for your bone health and healthy blood cells. Low iron levels during the menopause can also cause problems such as tiredness and hair loss. It is worth noting that the absorption of iron requires strong stomach acid. This brings about its own issues sometimes causing digestive issues, indigestion and gastric reflux. Some medications can affect iron absorption. If you feel your iron levels may be low I would always recommend that you get them checked, If you are deficient and need to increase your Iron levels, it can be found in red and organ meat, many plant foods are a great source of iron, such as spinach, broccoli, kale, Swiss chard, lentils, chickpeas, red kidney beans, soybeans, cashews, sesame seeds, dried apricots and baked potatoes.

## Calcium

Calcium gives your bones their strength and hardness. Taking calcium supplements and increasing your calcium intake is often recommended for menopausal women to help prevent osteoporosis as the decline in the hormone oestrogen causes a woman's bones to thin faster. Calcium has also been associated with overall health including beneficial effects in several non-skeletal disorders, primarily hypertension, colorectal cancer, obesity, and nephrolithiasis, although the extent of those effects have not been fully explored. Foods rich in calcium include dairy products such as milk, yoghurt, kefir and cheese, green leafy vegetables, other vegetables like cabbage and broccoli, nuts, sesame seeds, soft fish bones found in tinned fish, dried fruit, pulses (especially white beans) and tofu. You can also buy fortified foods and drink, like breakfast cereal and alternative plant-based milks.