

Smart Choices

Nutrition News for Seniors

Prepared By: Cathy Agan, Extension Agent (FNP)
Terri Crawford, Extension Agent (Nutrition)

Vitamins of Importance—C, B 12 and Folic Acid

Vitamin C, B 12 and Folic Acid are all water soluble vitamins. As their name implies they dissolve in water. They are not stored in the body—at least not in any significant amounts. Instead your body uses what it needs and gets rid of the rest.

These three particular vitamins have been found to play roles with short-term memory, problem solving performance, cognition and mental health.

You don't need large amounts of these vitamins. Even though you get rid of the excess, taking large doses of these vitamins could be harmful to your health. Let's look at each in more detail.

Vitamin C (Ascorbic Acid)



Roles of Vitamin C:

- Helps produce collagen that holds muscles, bones and other tissues together.
- Helps keep blood vessels firm so it protects from bruising.
- Helps absorb iron and folic acid from plant sources of food.
- Helps keep gums healthy.
- Helps heal cuts and wounds.
- Protects from infections.
- Plays a role in short-term memory and problem solving.

Recommended Intake: Adult males need 90 milligrams daily while females need 75 milligrams.

Food sources include:

- Citrus fruits
- Tomatoes
- Cabbage type vegetables
- Dark green vegetables
- Cantaloupe, papaya and mango
- Strawberries

Vitamin B 12 (Cobalamin)



Roles of Vitamin B12:

- Used in new cell formation.
- Helps maintain nerve cells.
- Helps break down fatty acids and amino acids.
- Works with folic acid (folate) to make red blood cells.

Recommended Intake: 2.4 micrograms for males and females.

Food sources include:

Mainly from animal products such as meats, poultry, eggs, milk and other dairy foods. Also found in some fortified cereals.

Folic Acid (Folate, Folacin)



Roles of Folic Acid:

- Plays role in making red blood cells
- Works with B 12 to form hemoglobin in red blood cells
- Helps control homocysteine levels, linked to heart disease risk.

Recommended Intake: 400 micrograms for males and females a day.

Food sources include:

- Enriched and fortified cereals
- Dark green leafy vegetables
- Dried beans and lentils
- Orange juice
- Peanuts

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- What's the Purpose of SNAP?

Make Half Your Grains Whole Grain Choices

Crust-less Spinach Pie

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons soft tub margarine
- 2 large eggs
- 1/2 cup flour
- 1/2 cup 1% milk
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 4 ounces shredded mozzarella cheese
- 2 cups chopped fresh spinach

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Melt margarine in an 8 inch baking pan.
3. Beat eggs well. Add flour, milk, garlic and baking powder. Pour into baking pan. Stir in cheese and spinach.
4. Bake for 30—35 minutes or until firm and the cheese is slightly golden brown.

Source: Adapted from Farmers Market Nutrition Program, Washington State University

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1/3 of recipe (165g)
Servings Per Container

Amount Per Serving

Calories 310 Calories from Fat 140

Total Fat 16g **% Daily Value*** 25%

Saturated Fat 7g 35%

Trans Fat 0g

Cholesterol 165mg 55%

Sodium 410mg 17%

Total Carbohydrate 29g 10%

Dietary Fiber 1g 4%

Sugars 11g

Protein 13g

Vitamin A 60% • Vitamin C 10%

Calcium 35% • Iron 15%

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:

	Calories	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less Than	65g	80g
Saturated Fat	Less Than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less Than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less Than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

Calories per gram:
Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4

Have You Ever Wondered...

What is the difference between “enriched” and “fortified”. Both terms mean that nutrients—primarily vitamins and minerals—were added to make a food more nutritious.



Enriched means that nutrients have been added back in after being lost from the food during processing. For example, B vitamins are lost from wheat when it is processed so those vitamins are added back in to the wheat.

Fortified means that nutrients have been added that were not originally found in the food. For instance, Vitamin D is added to milk so that your body can absorb the calcium and phosphorus naturally found in milk.

According to recent laws passed, most enriched grain products are fortified now with folic acid to reduce the incidence of certain birth defects.

What's the Purpose of SNAP?

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP is about helping people with limited incomes improve their nutrition for better health and disease prevention. The program is available to all eligible persons. Food Stamp coupons have been replaced by an electronic SNAP card that looks and works just like a typical debit or credit card used by any grocery shopper. No one but you and the grocery check-out clerk will know you are using SNAP. This program can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more contact 1-888-LA HELPU or visit www.dss.state.la.us.



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References: [Complete Food and Nutrition Guide](#) by American Dietetic Association and [Understanding Nutrition](#) by Ellie Whitney and Sharon Rady Rolfes