

Importance of Vitamins in our Diet and their Sources

Vitamins are essential for the normal functioning of our body, as they play a vital role in cell functions, growth, and development. Vitamins can be grouped into two types: water soluble vitamins and fat soluble vitamins. Out of the 13 essential vitamins, four vitamins, namely, vitamins A, D, E and K, are fat soluble vitamins, while the other 9 vitamins, including vitamins C and the B vitamins, are water soluble vitamins. Fat soluble vitamins can be stored in the fatty tissues, whereas water soluble vitamins except B12 are flushed out of the body through and should be replenished regularly.

One has to include a variety of foods in his/her diet in order to obtain all essential vitamins, as there is no single food that can provide all the vitamins to the body.

Many people have the misconception that they can fulfil their vitamin requirement through supplements or pills. However, many food sources of vitamins are available and by including such food groups in a balanced way, one can easily meet the daily requirement of most of the vitamins. There are several natural sources of vitamins are available.

Natural food sources of vitamins

Vitamin A

Vitamin A plays a vital role in bone growth, vision and cell division. It promotes good vision and helps to maintain healthy bones, teeth, skin, and soft tissues. It also helps in healing infections as it strengthens the immune system and enhances the production of RNA (Ribonucleicacid). Sources of Vitamin A include both animal and plant sources.

Animal sources include Beef, Eggs, Chicken, Fish, Sea food. Fruits and vegetables sources high in vitamin A include apples, Oranges, mangoes, Greens such as Palak, carrots, pumpkin, peas, tomatoes. Dairy products such as cheese, milk, and yogurt are also good natural sources of vitamin A.



Vitamin B Group

Vitamin B complex includes B 1 or thiamine, B2 or riboflavin, B3 or nicotinic acid, B6 or pyridoximine, B12 or cobalamin, and folate folic acid. Vitamin B complex helps in cell repair, digestion, and metabolism, and boosts the immune system.

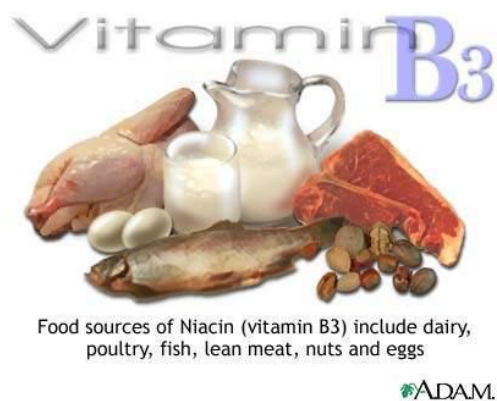
Vitamin B1 (Thiamine) helps in converting glucose into energy. It is found in brown rice, millet, wheat germ, nuts, wheat bran and sprouted grains.



Vitamin B2 (Riboflavin) helps in the conversion of fats, sugar, proteins into energy and the formation of red blood cells. It is found in Milk products, yeast extract, organ meats, eggs.



Vitamin B3 (Niacin) helps cells breathe. It promotes healthy skin and maintains blood sugar levels. It is found in whole grains, legumes, fish, and chicken.



Vitamin B5 (Pantothenic acid) helps in the production of anti-stress hormones. It also promotes healthy skin, hair and nerves. It is found in Egg, chicken, mutton, fish and vegetables such as mushrooms, wholewheat, lentils and sunflower seeds.

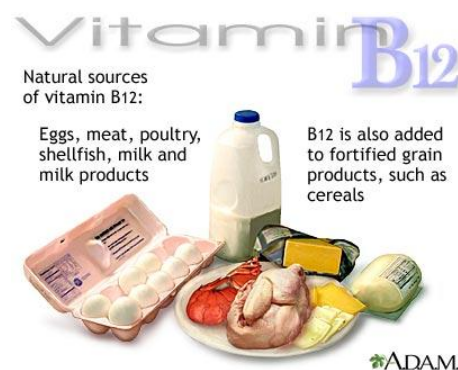
Vitamin B6 is considered to be an anti-depressant. It's also involved in blood formation, is

fundamental for protein metabolism and nervous system function. It is found in: Meat, salmon, banana, red kidney beans, cauliflower, cabbage and all green leafy vegetables.

Vitamin B9 (Folic acid) is important for pregnant women as it helps the synthesis of DNA and protein. It is also essential for red blood cell formation. It is found in: Whole grains, chicken, liver, spinach, red kidney beans, beet root, cashews, peanuts, chick peas, avocado, wheat germ, and tomato juice.

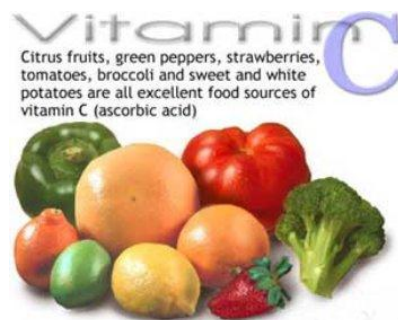


Vitamin B12 helps maintain healthy nervous system, required for normal growth and production of red blood cells. It also helps break down fatty acids. Vitamin B12 is manufactured only in the colon, that too in inadequate quantities. Some of the best food sources of vitamin B include bananas, dates, fish, nuts, palak, potatoes, pulses and dairy products.



Vitamin C

Vitamin C is vital for growth and it boosts the immune system, thereby preventing many ailments such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure, malabsorption of iron, etc. We already know that citrus fruits are rich in vitamin C; however, apart from citrus fruits, other foods that are high in vitamin C include palak, capsicum, peas, lemons.



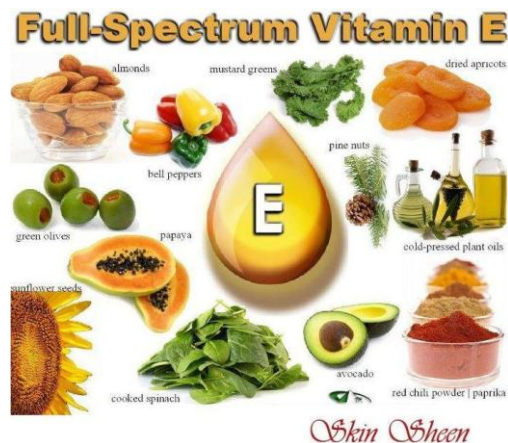
Vitamin D

Vitamin D is vital for healthy bones and teeth. It helps to absorb calcium and maintain the level of calcium and phosphorus. Sun is the best source for vitamin D. However, several food sources are also available. Some of the best food sources of Vitamin D include mashed potatoes, dairy products, dark green leafy vegetables, milk, dahi, organ meats such as liver, kidneys, eggs and mackerel.



Vitamin E

Vitamin E is an antioxidant and helps in the production of red blood cells. Foods that are rich in vitamin E include tomato, spinach, whole grain products, nuts, sunflower oil, and mackerel.



Vitamin K

Vitamin K plays a vital role in the blood clotting process in the body and helps to maintain strong bones. It is found in the cabbage family - broccoli, green and red cabbage, cauliflower, turnip, knol khol (ganth gobi), legumes, potatoes, tomatoes, and green leafy vegetables. Other sources of Vitamin K include meat, liver, egg yolk, vegetables like peas, cabbage, cucumbers, soybean.

Vitamin K

Food sources of vitamin K include cabbage, cauliflower, spinach and other green, leafy vegetables, as well as cereals



Vitamin P

Vitamin P, also known as bioflavonoids, helps in blood circulation by strengthening the capillaries. People whose diet includes fruits and vegetables, automatically can fulfil vitamin P requirement, as brightly colored fruits and vegetables are good sources of vitamin P. The best food sources of vitamin P include fruits such as oranges, lemons, lime, mangos, grapefruit, vegetables such as carrots, tomatoes, green pepper, and onions, garlic.