

Risks of taking supplements with vitamin B6

Key points

- In Australia vitamin B6 is found in more than 1500 health products such as multivitamins, magnesium, zinc, iron, sleep supplements and energy drinks
- Taking too much vitamin B6 from supplements and energy drinks can cause high vitamin B6 blood levels. You should check labels for vitamin B6
- If your vitamin B6 levels are too high, you might experience signs such as tingling, burning or numbness in your hands and feet or no signs at all. If left undetected permanent nerve damage can occur
- The only way to know if your levels are too high is to have a blood test that checks your vitamin B6 level
- There is a system to report high blood levels as an adverse event in Australia.

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Details

Are you at risk of a high vitamin B6 blood level?

Low levels or deficiency of vitamin B6 is rare. It is easy to keep your vitamin B6 levels in the normal range from the foods you eat every day.

You are unlikely to have a high vitamin B6 level if vitamin B6 from all your daily supplements and energy drinks stays below 2mg a day.

You are more likely to be at risk of high vitamin B6 levels if:

- You take multiple supplements containing vitamin B6
- You have been taking more than a recommended amount (above 2 mg) of vitamin B6 daily for a long time; many months or years.

Work out how much vitamin B6 you are taking each day.

On labels, vitamin B6 is also called:

- Pyridoxine hydrochloride
- Pyridoxal 5-phosphate
- Pyridoxal 5-phosphate monohydrate.

Use all of these names to work out how much vitamin B6 you are getting daily from supplements and energy drinks.

How will I know if my vitamin B6 blood levels could be high?

- You have checked all your daily supplements and energy drinks to find this adds up to be more than 2mg. Your health professional can help you with this
- You have symptoms such as tingling, burning or numbness in your hands and feet
- Not everyone experiences symptoms and will need to rely on a blood test
- You can ask your doctor or specialist for a blood test to check your vitamin B6 levels. Make sure you do not take any supplements with vitamin B6 for 24 hours before your blood test.

What do I do if I have a high vitamin B6 blood level?

Be reassured that your high level can return to normal by keeping vitamin B6 from supplements and energy drinks below 2mg a day.

- Discuss your supplement requirements with your health professional and to get help to find a low vitamin B6 alternative

- An Accredited Practising Dietitian can help you
- Ask for a repeat blood test to check your levels return to normal. Your health professional can guide you on best time to repeat this test.

How to report a high vitamin B6 level:

Every blood test that is above normal can be lodged as an ADVERSE EVENT to the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

This is the information that is needed to report an adverse event to the TGA:

1. **Patient Information;** a date of birth is enough
 1. **Reaction** e.g., a high blood test level and/or symptoms
2. **Medicine, supplement or energy drink details:**
 - Vitamin B6 source and amount
 - Batch Number (optional)
 - Expiry Date (optional)
 - AUST L or AUST R number (optional)
3. **Reporter:** name and contact details (you or your health professional)

For more information about reporting an adverse event:

If you are a health professional

<https://www.tga.gov.au/report-adverse-event-or-problem-health-professionals>

To report your own level

<https://www.tga.gov.au/safety/reporting-problems/report-adverse-event-or-problem-consumers>

When to see a dietitian

Be reassured that your high level can return to normal by keeping vitamin B6 from supplements and energy drinks below 2mg a day.

- Discuss your supplement requirements with your health professional and to get help to find a low vitamin B6 alternative
- An Accredited Practising Dietitian can help you
- Ask for a repeat blood test to check your levels return to normal. Your health professional can guide you on best time to repeat this test.

Top tips

- Check all your daily supplements and energy drinks to find this adds up to be more than 2mg. Your health professional can help you with this.
- Discuss your supplement requirements with your health professional and to get help to find a low vitamin B6 alternative.
- Ask for a repeat blood test to check your levels return to normal. Your health professional can guide you on best time to repeat this test.