



#### SUSANNAH LAWSON

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## SUPPLEMENT FOCUS

# Vitamin B6

It keeps your ticker healthy and helps you beat the bloat – find out what this vital vit can do for you

### What is it?

This member of the B vitamin family has a particularly busy role throughout life. At the beginning it helps ensure cells multiply, so is important during pregnancy\*. And later on in life, B6 is useful to support cardiovascular health, memory function and to help guard against osteoporosis.

### How do I use it?

This B vitamin is found in wholegrains, pulses (especially red kidney beans and lentils), nuts and seeds, bananas, Brussels sprouts, broccoli, watercress and cauliflower. Some people find it difficult to convert B6 into its active form, so may benefit from taking a supplement. Smoking and drinking can deplete levels, as can taking the contraceptive pill.

### How can it help me?

- **Heart health** B6 helps maintain healthy levels of homocysteine – a substance in the blood which reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease. A study in the journal *Circulation* found women with higher levels of B6 had a lower heart-attack risk.
- **Pre-menstrual syndrome** It can relieve symptoms including depression, breast tenderness and bloating, according to an analysis of studies in the *British Medical Journal* review.
- **Kidney stones** B6 is believed to reduce levels of substances in the

### Could it help you conceive?

A recent study of Chinese women found that those with good levels of vitamin B6 had increased odds of falling pregnant. The research, reported in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*, found that vitamin B6 helps the balance of progesterone and oestrogen, which is essential for conception.

### How much do I need?

The recommended daily intake for B6 is 2mg a day, which a good diet is likely to exceed. But an optimal intake is considered around 25mg a day, and some people may require more to address a deficiency-related condition. As B6 needs zinc and magnesium to work, it may also be worth considering taking a multivitamin and mineral, too.

- urine which can lead to the kidney stones, found a study in the *Journal of the American Society of Nephrology*.
- **Memory** Research in the *Journal of Nutrition* found that taking 75mg of B6 a day, along with B12 and folic acid, had a 'significant positive effect' on memory performance.
- **Healthy bones** B6 helps to keep homocysteine at a healthy low level – osteoporosis sufferers often have high levels. A recent review concluded that high homocysteine depletes bone quality.