

# What's the relationship between low levels of vitamin B-12 and depression?

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Vitamin B-12 and other B vitamins play a role in producing brain chemicals that affect mood and other brain functions. Low levels of B-12 and other B vitamins such as vitamin B-6 and folate may be linked to depression.

Low levels of a vitamin can result from eating a poor diet or not being able to absorb the vitamins you consume. Older adults, vegetarians and people with digestive disorders such as [celiac disease](#) or Crohn's disease may have trouble getting enough B-12. Sometimes a vitamin B-12 deficiency occurs for unknown reasons. Your doctor may order a blood test to check levels of B-12 or other vitamins if a deficiency is suspected.

If you have a vitamin B-12 deficiency, taking a daily supplement that includes vitamin B-12 may help your body get the nutrients it needs. But study

results have been mixed and questionable on whether vitamin B-12 supplements can help reduce the risk of depression. Because B-12 and other vitamin supplements can interact with some medications, especially in high doses, talk to your doctor before you take a vitamin supplement.

The best way to make sure you're getting enough B-12 and other vitamins is to eat a healthy diet that includes sources of essential nutrients. Vitamin B-12 is plentiful in animal products such as fish, lean meat, poultry, eggs, and low-fat and fat-free milk. Fortified [breakfast cereals](#) also are a good source of B-12 and other B vitamins.

Keep in mind, the role of B vitamins in depression isn't clear and more research is needed. And no supplement can replace proven depression treatments such as antidepressants and psychological counseling.

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