

## Heart-Healthy B Vitamins Also Protect Eyes

Healthnotes Newswire (April 23, 2009)-In a new study, women with heart disease or high risk of heart disease who took the B vitamins folic acid, B6, and B12 were less likely to develop age-related macular degeneration-the leading cause of severe and irreversible vision loss in older Americans.

Many healthcare providers recommend this B-vitamin triad for cardiovascular disease prevention, as it has been shown to bring down high levels of homocysteine, an amino acid that has been associated with cardiovascular disease and with other age-related conditions. This connection has led scientists to wonder if they might prevent more than just heart disease.

### The connection between heart health and vision

The study, published in the Archives of Internal Medicine, included 5,442 women over 40 who had no evidence of macular degeneration and either a diagnosis of cardiovascular disease or three or more coronary risk factors, such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes, inactive lifestyle, being overweight, and smoking. The women were assigned to take a daily supplement providing 2.5 mg of folic acid, 50 mg of vitamin B6 (pyridoxine hydrochloride), and 1 mg of vitamin B12 (cyanocobalamin), or placebo. They were monitored for age-related macular degeneration over an average of 7.3 years.

The B vitamins' protective effect was observed after two years and persisted through the end of the study. Women in the B-vitamin group had a 34% lower risk of developing age-related macular degeneration than women in the placebo group. The difference was even more dramatic when only visually significant age-related macular degeneration (an advanced stage that impairs eyesight) was considered: B vitamin-treated women were 41% less likely to develop this type.

### Caring for aging eyes

The progressive retinal damage that occurs in people with age-related macular degeneration eventually causes vision loss in the center of the visual field. The cause is not fully understood, but appears to involve oxygen free-radical damage, vascular changes in the small blood vessels of the eyes, and genetics. Having a family member with age-related macular degeneration greatly increases risk; other risk factors include excessive lifetime sunlight exposure, not getting enough antioxidant protection, and all of the risk factors associated with cardiovascular disease.

"We found that daily supplementation with folic acid, pyridoxine, and cyanocobalamin reduced the risk of age-related macular degeneration in women at increased risk of vascular disease," commented lead study author Dr. William Christen of Harvard Medical School in Boston, MA. "The current findings could have important public health ramifications if future research confirms that taking this B-vitamin combination can prevent age-related macular degeneration in other populations."

### Take steps to protect your vision

Taking the following steps might help prevent age-related macular degeneration even before symptoms appear:

Quit smoking. Smokers have a two- to threefold higher risk than nonsmokers.

Protect your eyes from sun exposure by wearing sunglasses.

Get regular exercise and maintain a healthy weight.

Eat a healthy diet, low in saturated fat and high in antioxidant-rich fruits and vegetables.

Consider taking an antioxidant supplement containing vitamins A, C, and E, as well as zinc, selenium, lutein, and zeaxanthin (pigment antioxidants found in leafy green vegetables). Research suggests that these nutrients protect vision.

Ask your healthcare provider about measuring your homocysteine level and consider taking a supplement with folic acid, B6, and B12.

**Maureen Williams, ND**, received her bachelor's degree from the University of Pennsylvania and her Doctorate of Naturopathic Medicine from Bastyr University in Seattle, WA. She has a private practice in Quechee, VT, and does extensive work with traditional herbal medicine in Guatemala and

Honduras. Dr. Williams is a regular contributor to Healthnotes Newswire . Medfinds.com is a comprehensive website for complementary and alternative medicine (CAM). Our growing directory of local alternative medicine doctors, schools and events is a simple gizmo for better health. You can easily find reliable information about alternative healthcare providers, holistic therapies, natural health remedies and the latest health news in our Resource Center. From acupuncture to weight loss, find your alternative on Medfinds...

### About the Author

Pregnancy Plus Prenatal Vitamins and Omega-3

All Vitamin & Nutrition Type Selections in Vitamins & Nutrition at

All -Vita NorthWest

All About Nutritional Supplements: Consumers Review Supplements

Vitamins aren't a cure- all - Los Angeles Times

Dietary supplements: Nutrition in a pill? - MayoClinic.com

Vitamin Supplements - Vitamin nutritional supplements - Vitamins

Buy vitamins , multivitamins, and vitamins a-z online

All Vitamins & Supplements

Source: <http://productsherbal.com>