

# Vitamin B6

At low doses, vitamin B6 improves depression and premenstrual symptoms. At high doses, it relieves several side effects to psychiatric medications:

- Tremor
- Restlessness (akathisia)
- Elevated prolactin (from antipsychotics)
- Possibly unwanted movements (tardive dyskinesia) or stiffness (extrapyramidal symptoms) from antipsychotics

Although it is a vitamin, it is powerful. It worked better than medications for elevated prolactin and equaled medications for restlessness. However, high doses also come with a risk of neuropathy, a reversible side effect that shows up as numbing, burning, or tingling sensations or poor coordination. We can reduce that risk by:

1. Use the active form of the vitamin (pyridoxal 5'-phosphate, also known as PLP or P5P).
2. Stick to the lowest dose that works (usually 100-300 mg for managing side effects).
3. Lower the dose to a safer range (50-100 mg) 3-6 months after the problem resolves.

## How to Take Vitamin B6

If you are taking more than 200 mg, split the dose up two or three times a day to improve absorption (eg, instead of 400 mg daily take 200 mg twice a day).

For side effects on lithium or antipsychotics, use 100-600 mg daily.

For premenstrual mood symptoms or depression, take 25-50 mg daily.

The doses above are based on the active form (PLP or P5P). If using standard forms of vitamin B6 (eg, pyridoxine), aim for double of those doses.

### Quick links to recommended products

[www.chrisaikenmd.com/supplements](http://www.chrisaikenmd.com/supplements)

### Warning

High doses can cause neuropathy. Stop the vitamin if you develop numbing, tingling, or burning sensations or poor coordination.

### Low-cost brand (\$9/month for 300 mg):

Nutricost P5P Vitamin B6 100mg

### Risks

Side effects are rare but can include nausea, headache and tiredness. Rarely, seizures and neuropathy have been reported after high-dose vitamin B6. Most of these cases involved doses over 2,000 mg daily, but there is concern that lower doses (eg, above 200 mg daily) could cause neuropathy after years of use.

Neuropathy is not known to occur with the active form of the vitamin (P5P), and laboratory studies have found that the problem is due to high levels of the inactive form (pyridoxine) and not the active form.

–Updated 9/2/2025 by Chris Aiken, MD

## Research

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