

Vitamins Decrease Lung Cancer Risk by 50%

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A recent study [1] of the effect of B vitamins on a large group of participants reported an inverse relationship between blood serum levels of vitamin B6, methionine, and folate and the risk of lung cancer. **High serum levels of vitamin B6, methionine and folate were associated with a 50% or greater reduction in lung cancer risk.** This exciting finding has not been widely reported in the media, but it confirms a growing body of evidence gathered over the last 40 years that B vitamins are important for preventing diseases such as cancer.

The study gathered information about the lifestyle and diet of 385,000 people in several European countries. The average age was 64 years, and most had a history of drinking alcohol daily. Blood samples were then taken from these participants, and some of those (889) that developed lung cancer were analyzed for the level of several B vitamins and related biochemicals such as methionine, an essential amino acid. These nutrients were studied because they are known to be important in the metabolism of single carbon compounds, which is necessary for the synthesis and repair of DNA in the body's tissues [2]. Thus, B vitamins are helpful in preventing defects in DNA which can cause cancer [2-4].

Specifically, a high level of **either** vitamin B6, **or** methionine, **or** folate reduced the risk for lung cancer. **High levels of all these nutrients together produced an even lower risk.** The effects were large, so the results are highly significant.

The study divided the participants into three categories, depending on whether they currently smoked, had previously smoked, or had never smoked. While smoking is the most important lifestyle factor in the risk for lung cancer, interestingly, the effects of vitamin B6, methionine, and folate were fairly constant among the three categories. That is, **those with higher levels of these B vitamins had a significantly lower risk of lung cancer no matter whether they smoked or not.** The report emphasizes that this result strongly suggests that the effect of these essential nutrients in lowering the risk for cancer is real and not purely a statistical correlation. And, the report reiterates that smoking is dangerous, greatly increasing the risk for lung cancer in older people after decades of insult to the lungs.

Some widely-reported health studies have suggested that B vitamins can increase the risk of cancer. The theory is that these vitamins can help to prevent cancer from their effects in strengthening DNA synthesis and repair, but that when cancer is present, the vitamins supposedly help the cancer to grow [5]. However, there is a long history of health studies, including the above mentioned study, reporting that B vitamins including folate and vitamin B6 can help to prevent many types of cancer, such as breast, prostate and colorectal cancer [1-6].

It is just amazing how the news media could have missed this, but they pretty much did. In one much-publicized study [7] it was widely claimed that "Multivitamins increase deaths in older women!" Actually, the study found that B complex vitamins were associated with a 7 percent **decrease** in mortality, vitamin C was associated with a 4 percent **decrease** in mortality, vitamin D was associated with an 8 percent **decrease** in mortality, and several minerals were associated with a **decrease** in mortality.

Essential nutrients in a well-balanced diet, including B-complex, C, D, and E vitamins, are crucial to maintaining good health into old age for a variety of reasons. Persons taking adequate levels of vitamins will live longer, with fewer heart attacks [7] and other serious diseases such as diabetes [8], multiple sclerosis [9], and dementia [10].

The question begged by the report is, what role did vitamin supplements play in the blood levels reported for these essential nutrients? Taking a multivitamin that includes B-complex vitamins will obviously increase the blood levels of these essential nutrients. However, the value of supplements was not emphasized in the report.

So we will emphasize it here. Vitamins dramatically lower lung cancer risk. Supplements provide these nutrients in abundance. Modern diets do not.

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