

“B” Smart for Brain Health

From misplaced car keys to the forgotten name of a new acquaintance, “senior moments” affect all of us from time to time. Fortunately, there may be something we can do to sharpen our brains as we age. Even better, this small action—making sure we get enough of certain [B vitamins](#)—may be particularly helpful for those affected by [depression](#), a condition that can negatively affect brain performance.

Boosting the Brain: To study how folic acid and vitamin B12 affect brain function, researchers randomly selected 909 older adults with symptoms of depression to receive a supplement providing 400 mcg of folic acid and 100 mcg of vitamin B12 or a placebo (no vitamins) pill. Participants completed phone questionnaires and tests to measure their thinking (cognitive) function at the beginning of the study and 12 and 24 months later.

Compared with the group not taking folic acid and vitamin B12, certain measures of thinking function significantly improved in those who received supplements:

- ❑ Overall score on a test of cognitive function.
- ❑ Immediate memory, which is the ability to remember small amounts of information over a few seconds to minutes.
- ❑ Delayed memory, which is the ability to remember events or information after a time delay or from the past.

There were no differences between the groups in other aspects of cognitive function, such as attention and processing speed.

B vitamins and beyond:

This study suggests older adults with symptoms of depression may benefit from a folic acid and vitamin B12 supplement, but these vitamins will not work miracles by themselves. In addition to getting your “Bs,” there are many things you can do keep your brain sharp as you age.

- *Seek support.* If you feel down, depressed, or unable to enjoy your life, talk to your doctor. It may feel hard to accept help, but depression can be a medical condition, just like diabetes, high cholesterol, or high blood pressure. You’d accept medical care for these issues, and you should for mental health too.
- *Manage total health.* If you have other chronic health conditions, such as heart disease or diabetes, make sure you’re taking medications as prescribed and following your doctor’s advice about other self-care measures. These conditions not only affect blood flow in the body, they can affect blood flow to your brain. Poor blood flow means poorer brain function.
- *Get social.* Having an active social life is associated with better brain function. Feeling part of a group and enjoying common interests improves health, especially as we age.

- *Volunteer.* “It’s better to give than to get” is never truer than when it comes to brain health. Volunteering improves both physical and mental health. Find a cause you’re passionate about—walking dogs at the local shelter, serving meals in a soup kitchen, visiting with the homebound—and lend a hand.
- *Move more.* If possible, get some physical activity every day. Even 30 minutes of walking is enough to improve brain and body health.

Hazle Drugs brand of “B Well” is a high potency B Complex vitamin that supports energy production, maintains healthy serum levels of homocysteine and promotes a healthy nervous system. Stop in today to speak with our Certified Clinical Nutritionist, Bill Spear, R.Ph, CCN to learn more about B vitamins and maintaining overall health.

Bill Spear, R.Ph., CCN is a Compounding Pharmacist and Certified Clinical Nutritionist. He is available for personal nutritional consultations at Hazle Drugs, 1 E. Broad St., Hazleton, Pa. 570-454-2476 / 800-439-2026 www.hazle drugs.com