Drink alcohol?

It's good to know about thiamine

ALCOHOL

HARM REDUCTION

We all need thiamine - also known as Vitamin B1 - in our diet

Thiamine is a vitamin that turns sugar into energy and helps our nerves, brain, and heart to work properly

Unfortunately, alcohol stops our body from absorbing thiamine from the food we eat.

And if we drink a lot of alcohol, over time, a lack of thiamine can be very dangerous to our health, and even cause heart and brain damage.

When we don't have enough thiamine we can also feel:

short of breath

extra tired

confused

forgetful

cranky and irritable

We can also get:

blurry vision

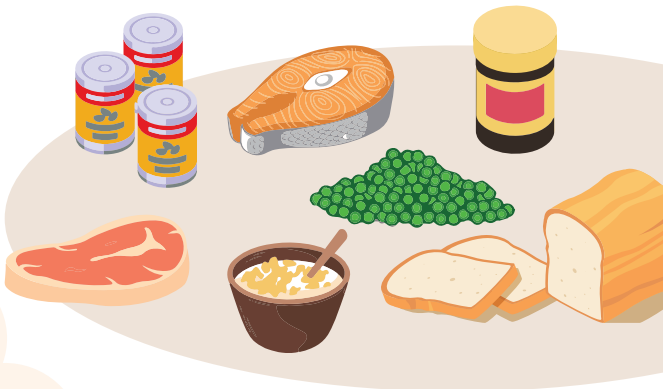
loss of coordination in our arms and legs

and our muscles can feel weak

But there is good news!

For starters, we can eat thiamine rich foods like:

- whole grains, oats, and wheat (e.g. bread and porridge)
- yeast products (e.g. Vegemite and nutritional yeast)
- chicken, pork, and fish
- potatoes
- baked beans, peas, and beans



Even better, you can also take thiamine tablets

Thiamine tablets are low-cost and widely available at most supermarkets and chemists. You can also speak to your doctor about obtaining thiamine.

- Start by taking 1 × 100mg tablets 3 times per day (morning, noon, and night) for 2 weeks.
- Then keep taking 1 × 100mg tablet every day if you are drinking alcohol.

You can take thiamine tablets with, or without, food.

It can also be helpful to take a magnesium supplement as it helps the body to absorb thiamine.

You can't take too much thiamine. Your body just pees out what it doesn't need.

Note: Some people may feel sick or have a stomach-ache when taking thiamine, but these side effects are usually mild. This can be managed by taking thiamine with food.

Sometimes it can be hard to remember to take thiamine tablets

Here are some things you can try:

1. Keep your thiamine bottle out somewhere where you can see it.
2. Get into the habit of taking it when you are doing something you already normally do, like taking other medication, eating a meal, or brushing your teeth.
3. Put your thiamine tablets in the fridge or on the shelf next to your drinks as a visual reminder.
4. Set up a phone alarm or a calendar reminder.

Taking thiamine is one of the easiest things you can do to look after your brain and body

Let's make a thiamine plan...

After today I will get my daily dose of thiamine by:

The things I will do to help me to remember to eat and/or take thiamine are:

If I want to know more about thiamine I can ask or contact:

My GP _____

Someone else _____

Please note: If you are a heavy / daily drinker, we recommend seeking medical advice before stopping or cutting back alcohol to avoid severe and/or dangerous withdrawal.

You can also contact the National Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, on 1800 250 015

This resource was developed by Insight: Centre for AOD training and workforce development and Townsville Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Service (ATODS), Townsville Hospital and Health Service.
Clients provided feedback on this publication.
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