

# MISSING SOMETHING?

Experiencing weird symptoms, and you can't work out what's wrong? Clinical Nutritionist Suzie Sawyer looks at some of the most common vitamin deficiencies and how to solve them...

## MUSCLE CRAMPS AND PERIOD PAINS

'This may be a sign that you're low in magnesium, which trigger a lot of important enzyme processes within the body. It's vital for proper nerve and muscle function and helps regulate calcium absorption,' says Suzie. 'Low magnesium can lead to painful cramps and spasms, including period pains. Other symptoms may include insomnia, chronic fatigue, lack of energy, irritability (it has a natural calming effect) and low mood.'

**FIX IT** Eat plenty of magnesium-rich leafy greens and dark green veg, oily fish, nuts and seeds. Avoid processed foods and cut back on tea and coffee, as these deplete magnesium. Certain medications (such as antibiotics, insulin and the birth control pill) also reduce magnesium. If you suffer from muscle cramps and period pains taking magnesium supplements can help. **TRY** Nature's Best MagAsorb Ultra, £11.50 for 120 tablets, naturesbest.co.uk.

WORDS: EVA GIZOWSKA. PHOTOS: GETTY, TIMEINC/CONTENT.COM



## FEELING TIRED ALL THE TIME?

A lack of vitamin B12 and iron could be the reason. 'Vitamin-B12 deficiency causes a whole range of symptoms, including debilitating fatigue,' Suzie explains. 'Other symptoms may include breathing problems, lack of energy, rapid heartbeat, memory and concentration issues, weakness, balance problems, pins and needles, and numbness in the legs.'

'Low iron levels can lead to anaemia, with symptoms of tiredness, palpitations and

shortness of breath,' she adds.

**FIX IT** Eat foods that contain vitamin B12. These include poultry, meat, eggs, fish and dairy products. Also, foods that are high in iron, such as red meat, liver, offal, nuts, dark leafy greens, dried fruits (eg, apricots, raisins), wholegrains, brown rice, nuts, and beans. And take a supplement. **TRY** Pharmaton Vitality, £9.69 for 30 capsules (contains



vitamins, minerals and ginseng.

It's clinically proven to boost energy). Also, BioCare Vitasorb B12, £5.60 for 15ml.

You can become depleted in iron, if you're deficient in B12, and vitamin C - both are needed for proper iron absorption.

To check your vitamin B12 and iron levels, ask your GP for blood tests.

## SKIN PROBLEMS

Dry skin, eczema and acne-like outbreaks are a sign you may be lacking omega-3 essential fatty acids. 'Essential fatty acids have a natural anti-inflammatory effect that is beneficial for skin,' says Suzie.

**FIX IT** Omega-3 fatty acids are found in oily fish, such as wild salmon, pilchards, sardines and fresh tuna. Aim to eat at least 140mg of oily fish a week (two portions). Take a supplement too. **TRY** Solgar Omega-3 Double Strength Fish Oil, £14.50 for 30 softgels, solgaronline.co.uk.



## ACHES AND PAINS IN MUSCLES AND JOINTS

This could be a clue that you're not getting enough vitamin D. 'We need vitamin D to help our body absorb certain nutrients, such as calcium and phosphorus, needed for strong bones and healthy muscles,' says Suzie. 'Vitamin D also has many other benefits. It helps regulate blood pressure and improve cardiovascular health by protecting blood vessels. New research published in the *BMJ* suggests that more than three million people could avoid colds and flu each year if they took vitamin D supplements.'

**FIX IT** Top up on vitamin D by spending 20-30 minutes in the sun daily. Vitamin D is produced as a result of the interaction of the sun on the skin. Eat D-rich foods, such as oily fish (wild salmon, mackerel, sardines); dairy, whole grains and fortified foods. And take a supplement. The recommended dose is 400iu (10mcg). **TRY** BioCare Bio-D, Liquid Vitamin D3, 400iu, £8.65 for 15ml, biocare.co.uk.





## Vital vitamins

### BLEEDING GUMS

'If you suffer from inflamed and/or bleeding gums this may be a sign that you're deficient in folic acid, a type of vitamin B,' explains Suzie.

**FIX IT** Eat lots of foods that are high in folic acid - such as leafy green vegetables, beans, wholegrains, brown rice, and whole-grain cereals. Take a supplement. **TRY** Solgar Folate, 400ug, £15.99 for 100 tablets, [revital.co.uk](http://revital.co.uk).



### CRACKS AROUND THE CORNERS OF THE MOUTH

'A dry mouth with cracks around the corners of lips is a classic sign of vitamin B2 deficiency,' Suzie reveals. 'You may also have an inflamed tongue. Many people are deficient in B vitamins. Other signs include irritability and mood swings (B6); skin problems, insomnia and diarrhoea (B3); feeling anxious, nervy and grinding your teeth (B5); poor memory and lack of clarity (B1); weakness, depression, and poor appetite (B1). B vitamins are water soluble, so they're easily excreted,' she adds. 'You also use more vitamin B when you're under stress. So, you need to replenish supplies regularly, either through diet and, or supplements.

**FIX IT** Good sources of B vitamins include meat, dairy, wheatgerm and whole-grain cereals, green veg, pulses such as beans and lentils, nuts, seeds and fruit. But tea, coffee and alcohol deplete B vitamins. **TRY** Alive! Vitamin B-Complex Soft Jells, £14.99 for 60 soft jells, [feelaliveuk.com](http://feelaliveuk.com).



### NOT ENOUGH NUTRIENTS?

More than 70% of us do not eat our five-a-day of fruit and veg. Yet, a new nutrition report by the supplement brand Alive! shows that the human body needs around 45 different nutrients daily to run efficiently.

And 27% of women and 48% of girls have low iron intakes. The most common deficiencies are in iron, magnesium, potassium, selenium and vitamin D.

The World health Organisation says that there are strong links between certain nutrients and the risk of developing diseases, including heart disease, cancer, diabetes, osteoporosis and depression.

A good way to safeguard your nutritional health is by taking a daily multivitamin and a mineral supplement. **TRY** Alive! Women's Energy Soft Jell Multivitamin, £14.99 for 60 tablets; Solgar Omnium, £19.99 for 30 tablets.



### DANDRUFF

'This may indicate that you're low in the mineral selenium, and also vitamin B6,' says Suzie.

**FIX IT** Eat selenium-rich foods, such as Brazil nuts (three a day for your daily quota), kidney, liver, fish, eggs, cheese, mushrooms, oats, nuts, sunflower seeds, chicken, turkey, beef, brown rice, and whole-grain rye. And take a supplement. **TRY** Nature's Best Selenium 200ug, plus A,C and E, £8.50 for 180 tablets, [naturesbest.co.uk](http://naturesbest.co.uk).

