

DAVID RUSSELL ON...

Are you getting enough?



Vitamins are such a ‘turn on’. They ‘turn on’ the enzymes which support our bodies’ processes, so are critical in producing energy, boosting our immune system, protecting our arteries, balancing our hormones, and, importantly they are vital for the brain. www.foodforthebrain.org, is a great place for a mental health masterclass.

But what are the key facts we need to know about vitamins? Well, A, C and E are key antioxidants, B and C are vital for turning food into mental and physical energy, D helps control calcium levels and K is essential in blood clotting. That leaves the B’s: B1 and B5 support the brain, B2 and B3 aid the metabolism with digestion and B6 and B12 support red blood formation.

How do we get enough? Three or more servings a day of dark green, leafy and root vegetables and three or more servings of fresh fruit, plus nuts and seeds will satisfy the body’s needs.

How can we apply this to our operations? First, beware the three enemies of vitamins - heat, water and oxidation. Any form of heating destroys nutrients, so steam in preference to boiling or frying. Protect foods by cooking them whole or in large pieces and you will potentially retain 20% more of the vitamins. When boiling, use less water and heat for a shorter period so vitamin leaching is less likely to occur. Vitamins C, A & E are all susceptible to oxidation so hold fruit and vegetables in cool, dark stores to minimise loss. Seasonal, locally produced fruit and vegetables will contain more nutrients than imported varieties. So, the message is, “Provide what is in season”.

SEASONAL FARE	NUTRIENTS
Carrots	Vitamins A, B, E & folic acid
Courgettes	Vitamins A & C
French Beans	Vitamin A & folate
Peas	Vitamins B, K & folic acid
Sweetcorn	Vitamins C & B
Gooseberries	Vitamins A & C
Raspberries	Vitamin C - very low GL
Strawberries	Vitamin C
Peaches	Vitamins A & C
Lettuce	Vitamin E

(Note: 5 strawberries = 1 orange)