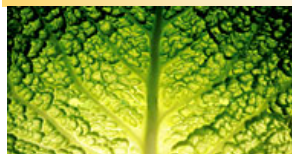




SHARAN

Sanctuary for Health And Reconnection to Animals and Nature



SHARAN Newsletter - Issue #18 - May 2013

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Special Feature: Do we need to take supplements?

A balanced plant-based diet made up of whole foods (unprocessed, unrefined and unpeeled), fresh fruits and vegetables (organic if available) and as little oil as possible, provides almost all the nutrients and vitamins needed for optimal health, without the unhealthy fat and cholesterol which are the causes of illness and disease. **However, there are a few nutrients which may need to be supplemented regularly to stay healthy.**



Vitamin B12 can be lacking, and **vitamin D**, difficult to get enough of. Both vegans and omnivores tend to have low levels of these in our modern world. People on unhealthy diets are likely to have **omega 3** deficiency and perhaps a few on healthy vegan diets also may have this deficiency, particularly the elderly.

Vitamin B12 is an important and essential vitamin which is required by every cell of our body. It plays a vital role in nerve cell activity, the development of red blood cells, DNA synthesis and regulation, fatty acid synthesis, energy production and the production of mood-affecting substances in the body. It also helps to control homocysteine levels, thus reducing the risk of stroke and heart disease. A long-term deficiency in vitamin B12 can cause permanent damage to the brain and nervous system. For more information on supplementing vitamin B12, see [this page](#).

Vitamin D is important for calcium absorption and helps boost immunity by fortifying the white blood cells. Lack of vitamin D can cause a deficiency in calcium resulting in osteoporosis (deterioration of bone mass) and osteopenia (thinning of bones). It can also be the cause of mental health problems, depression, diabetes, high blood pressure and atherosclerosis, autoimmune diseases and some types of cancers. For more information on taking vitamin D, visit [this page](#).

EFAs (Essential Fatty Acids) like alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), an omega 3 fatty acid, and linoleic acid (LA), an omega 6 fatty acid, are considered essential fatty acids because they cannot be synthesised by humans. Most people on a whole plant-based diet will get enough of these.

The long-chain omega 6 fatty acid, arachidonic acid (AA), can be synthesised from LA. The long-chain omega 3 fatty acids, eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), can be synthesised from ALA, but DHA synthesis may be insufficient under certain conditions. Omega 6 is found in higher quantities in most vegetable oils such as corn, soy, safflower, sunflower and sesame. Most diets that include oils tend to be much higher in omega 6 fatty acids than omega 3 fatty acids, therefore upsetting the balance.

Only plants make essential fatty acids and some fish are a rich source because they eat plants. But fish also

contain bad fats, mercury and other pollutants, causing other problems. DHA is important in the prevention and treatment of heart disease, arrhythmias and depression. DHA deficiency could cause neurological problems. DHA supplementation may be needed in some people. This may be of special concern in older vegans. A vegan source of DHA is available in India through Unived. To learn more about fatty acids, read [this page](#).



What you can do

1. Check your vitamin B12 and D levels.

The only way to find out if you are deficient in vitamin B12 or D is to take a simple blood test.

For vitamin B12, you can test holotranscobalamin levels or if unavailable, serum B12, or homocysteine levels. Serum B12 may be high if you are taking spirulina or some source of cyanocobalamin which can not be easily used by the body. Checking homocysteine levels may therefore be more accurate.

If you spend most of the day indoors and avoid the sun, or live in a place with long winters or smoggy weather, it's very important to get your Vitamin D level checked. A blood test can be done to check vitamin D3 levels: 20 to 50 ng/ml is the normal range. Less than 20 is too low and in this case, one should take supplements. Once the level reaches around 30+, sunlight is the best source.

2. Eat mainly fresh whole plant foods and avoid fried foods.

It's a good idea to have whole plant foods (avocado and coconut are examples) as a major source of your fat intake. If using oil for cooking, choose those rich in monounsaturated fats like olive, canola or peanut. Oils rich in omega 3s may be used (like flaxseed and hemp) but should never be heated. Avoid fried foods and processed foods rich in trans fats and omega 6 fatty acids.

3. Educate others.

The importance of supplementing vitamins B12 and D and omega 3 fatty acids for optimal health and well-being is very often overlooked by many medical practitioners. A severe deficiency in vitamin B12 can even be life threatening, and a deficiency in Vitamin D is the cause of many illnesses. Let your friends and family members know why it's important to check levels and take supplements if necessary for optimal health. New vegans are especially at risk since they may be unaware of the importance of vitamin B12 and it could take a few years for health problems to surface.

Fact or Fiction?

Certain plant foods can provide sufficient amounts of vitamin B12.

FICTION!

Yeast, algae, fermented foods and some other plant foods do provide small amounts of vitamin B12. However, these are not reliable sources as the amount of B12 in these foods is so small, that huge quantities would have to be eaten to meet the recommended daily allowance. Since B12 is such a vital vitamin, it is important to take a supplement.





Recipe

Fat-free Banana Bread

Ingredients:

3 large ripe bananas
1 cup brown sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla
2 cups whole wheat flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon cinnamon
¼ cup water

Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 350°F. In a large bowl mash the bananas with sugar and vanilla until combined. Add the water and mix well. In another bowl, sift together the flour, baking soda, baking powder and cinnamon. Add the dry mixture to wet mixture slowly and stir until just mixed. Pour the batter into a loaf pan and bake at 350°F for one hour.

News from SHARAN



SHARAN events

Since the beginning of 2013, SHARAN has presented over a dozen events in Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Pune, Auroville and Goa. A series of workshops and special events are planned over the next few months in Mumbai and Bangalore. These include:

Peas vs Pills Workshop

Reversing Diabetes Workshop

Reversing Heart Disease and Hypertension Workshop

Cooking classes

Check [our list of upcoming events](#) for all details.

SHARAN's 21-day Disease Reversal Retreat will be held from 9 to 30 June 2013 at the **SwaSvara resort in Gokarna, Karnataka**. This special retreat is for people who want to reverse disease and heal themselves with healthy and healing foods - not medicines - in a holiday atmosphere with like-minded people. Only 20 rooms are available and we will accept a maximum of 30 participants, so register now!

Email seminars@sharan-india.org

[More details are available here.](#)



Other news

As the number of vegans grow in India, so does demand for quality products and services. **Carrots**, Bangalore's 1st vegan restaurant, offers delicious and healthy vegan dishes on its à-la-carte menu and is introducing a lunch buffet on May 1st. More information is available on their [Facebook page](#) and their [website](#).

Bangalore also looks forward to the imminent launch of **Paradigm Shift**, a 100%



vegan café. See their [Facebook page](#) for more information.

Bean Me Up, a vegan restaurant in North Goa is also receiving rave reviews for its delicious and innovative vegan fare. Check out their [Facebook page](#) and their [website](#).

Other vegan enterprises providing quality food products are growing. **Millie Mitra makes fantastic cheese in Bangalore** (Tel. 080 41236539) while **Jane Mason provides the community of Auroville with an awesome variety of vegan goodies like vegan cheese, hummus and chocolate mousse** which are available in Foodlink and Farm Fresh (please note that stock is not available until July).

Join a vegan potluck in your area

Would you like to meet vegans living in your area and share tips and recipes? Or are you considering a lifestyle change and would like to learn more about veganism? **Vegan potlucks** are held in cities across India and are open to everyone: vegans, aspiring vegans, vegetarians or anyone interested in learning more about veganism.

For a list of Indian vegan groups on Facebook, see [this page](#).



The [SHARAN photo album](#) features pictures of all our past events. Those who have attended our events may enjoy seeing pictures of themselves and the group. (Click on the image to get an enlarged version.)

Did you miss past issues of this newsletter? Have a look at the [SHARAN newsletter archives](#).



The **Reversing Diabetes Facebook Group** is for people who would like to learn about and exchange information on how a healthy plant-based whole foods diet can help reverse diabetes. Members share tips and their own experiences of how they have been able to control and reverse diabetes through the food they eat. [Click here to join the group](#).



Join [SHARAN India on Facebook](#) to find out about upcoming events, join in discussions and share experiences, and meet other like-minded people!



SHARAN India is now on Twitter. [Click here](#) to follow us!



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What is SHARAN?

We are a non-profit organization with the goals of spreading holistic health awareness, and an ecologically sustainable compassionate lifestyle. We believe that all life on the planet is interconnected. By reconnecting we can heal ourselves and our earth.

Visit our website: www.sharan-india.org

Contact us: info@sharan-india.org