

# "I feel like the old

*For years Joan Ballantyne, 56, battled relentless fatigue, insomnia and joint pain. Then she discovered the shocking culprit—and the simple remedy that changed everything*

**W**hat was I saying?" Joan Ballantyne asked her husband as she sat confused at the dinner table, struggling to stay engaged in their conversation. Forgetting what she was saying—or doing—had become part of Joan's day-to-day and made it nearly impossible for her to function.

## Tired & foggy

"For seven years, I was constantly trying to either hide or overcome my failing memory," says Joan. "I couldn't even watch television because I would constantly zone out and had to rewind and rewatch scenes several times. I was always forgetting what I was saying or doing and feared I was developing early-onset dementia or another neurological condition. Along with fear for my brain health, I was embarrassed that I appeared to be drunk or that something was wrong with me because I would completely lose my train of thought—all the time!

"The horrible insomnia I battled made my brain fog even worse, but no matter what I tried—meditating, turning off electronics, counting sheep—I was never able to get a good night's sleep. Many nights, I had shooting pains running up and down my legs that forced me out of bed to slather topical pain

medication, hoping for relief that never came. But even if the pain subsided, I still couldn't fall—or stay—awake all night long.

"My doctor sent me for numerous tests, including blood and nerve testing, but they never uncovered a reason for my worsening symptoms. He thought perhaps I had sciatica and prescribed medication, but it didn't help.

"As my symptoms lingered, my stress soared as I worried about my declining health and inability to sleep. My doctor suggested an antidepressant, and I also started taking an herbal anti-inflammatory vitamin for osteoarthritis, plus turmeric tablets to combat the hip and knee pain I developed. I also tried taking a magnesium supplement for my leg pain, melatonin to sleep and probiotics and a brain health supplement. Nothing helped. Eventually, I required a cane to walk.

"Bouncing from several specialists, I was tested for everything from ALS to cancer, MS, diabetes, lupus,

## 30-second QUIZ

### IS A SNEAKY VITAMIN OVERLOAD MAKING YOU TIRED?

If you experience fatigue and two or more of the following, toxic levels of vitamin B-6 may be to blame

- Dizziness
- Balance problems
- Memory lapses
- Headaches
- Nausea
- Rashes/itching
- Sensitivity to light
- Numbness or tingling in hands and feet

Joan Ballantyne, 56, Dundas, Ontario, Canada

# me again!"

Lyme disease and more. Yet no one was able to pinpoint a cause for my declining health. I started feeling like doctor after doctor thought my symptoms were all in my head.

## An answer at last

"In March of 2022, I had surgery for a hiatal hernia, and my surgeon was baffled by my symptoms and said he wanted me to get a blood test to check my vitamin B-6 levels. When he called with my results a few days later, he explained my levels were 240 and that the normal range is 5 to 50.

"He told me to immediately stop taking all vitamin B-6, but I was confused because I didn't take a B-6 supplement. He explained that this vitamin is in any food that says 'enriched and fortified,' like bread, cereal and more. I couldn't believe that the strict diet I believed was healthy for me was now poison and making me feel like I was slowly dying.

"He explained that my muscles were so full of vitamin B-6, they could no longer absorb it and I had vitamin B-6 toxicity. I was shocked

that a vitamin—something you think of as good for you—was making me so sick.

"I discovered vitamin B-6 lurks everywhere; it was added to the melatonin, magnesium and vitamin D supplements I was taking. It was also in the energy drink for menopausal women I drank daily.

"Once I started scouring labels and learning all the ways B-6 is part of a daily diet, I began reducing the amount of B-6 I consumed. After six weeks, the tingling and pain in my legs and feet greatly improved and no longer woke me in the night or kept me awake. I also started sleeping all night long without tossing and turning from mysterious insomnia. After a few months, I was able to walk without my cane.

"I was thrilled that I could also read again! My brain fog had made reading impossible because I couldn't concentrate or remember anything I read. I also stopped zoning out when watching TV and asking my husband to rewind a show because I didn't know what I had seen moments earlier. I'm so happy to have my life back and to feel so alive!"

—As told to Gina Roberts-Grey

## Alert!

### Avoiding B-6 excess wards off fractures

**Skipping supplements high in vitamin B-6 reduces hip fracture risk by 30%**, suggests a Harvard University study. Researchers discovered the reduction by comparing people who didn't take B-6 supplements to those who supplemented with 25 mg. or more of the vitamin per day. And while the reasons behind the benefits have yet to be fully explained, the study authors theorize that getting too much B-6 may impair the action of estrogen receptors that promote new bone formation and blunt the breakdown of existing bone. And as Norwegian experts reporting in the *Journal of Bone and Mineral Research* note, nerve damage produced by too much B-6 may increase the risk of falls that result in fractures.

## Hidden vitamin B-6 is triggering an epidemic of fatigue

**!** Most doctors miss toxic levels of vitamin B-6 (*pyridoxine*), asserts osteopathic physician Orestes Gutierrez, D.O., a holistic health specialist in Springfield, Oregon. B-6 plays crucial roles in maintaining immune and nervous system function; plus, it helps keep blood sugar in balance. That's why women over 50 need 1.5 mg. of the vitamin per day. But B-6 is added to many foods and supplements, and women can unknowingly ingest excess amounts. That's a problem since high levels can damage nerves and trigger fatigue, nerve pain, memory problems and more.

**!** The National Institutes of Health maintains that intakes of up to 100 mg. daily are safe, but a British study found that 60% of women showed signs of toxicity after taking 50 to 100 mg. of B-6 daily for more than six months. And Dr. Gutierrez has seen patients develop symptoms from supplementing with as little as 25 mg. per day.

**✓** Doctors can diagnose B-6 toxicity with a simple blood test. And in good news, addressing overload with the strategies below can reverse draining symptoms.

**😊** Eliminating added B-6 from your diet is key. *NYT* bestselling author Alan Christianson, N.M.D., advises avoiding supplements, processed foods, sports drinks and herbal teas that list B-6 or *pyridoxine hydrochloride* in their ingredients. But since B-6 does serve important roles in the body, he advises enjoying natural sources like tuna, chicken, chickpeas, potatoes, bananas, onions and spinach daily. "B-6 found naturally in foods doesn't produce toxicity," he explains.

**😊** Taking *alpha-lipoic acid (ALA)* can help, says Dr. Gutierrez. ALA defends against oxidative stress, a cell-damaging process triggered by excess B-6. It also increases blood flow to nerves and aids in their regeneration. The amount he advises: 300 to 600 mg. daily.