

# Inositol

Inositol is a vitamin and a natural part of brain cell membranes. It is found in beans, grains, nuts, and fruits. The average adult eats 1,000 mg (1 gram) a day of inositol, and there is reason to think that people with mood problems need more. Depression and bipolar disorder are associated with low levels of inositol in the brain.

Inositol is also known as a vitamin B8. There are several forms available, and the type used for mental health is myo-inositol.

In small clinical trials, inositol helped bipolar depression, fatigue, anxiety, panic disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, bulimia, and anger. The evidence there is promising but preliminary, and in most of these studies it was added to medication (not used on its own). Potential medical benefits include diabetes, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), and treatment of cancer.

## How it works

Inositol helps brain cells grow and develop receptors that are crucial for healthy brain function. Some of its effects resemble those of lithium, though it lacks the side effects of lithium.

## Side effects and Interactions

Inositol is generally well tolerated. Possible side effects include mild increases in glucose (blood sugar), flatulence, nausea, sleepiness, insomnia, dizziness and headache.

Though no major risks are known, its safety is not well studied and the products are not regulated by the FDA. It may decrease mineral absorption, so best to take it 1 hour away from meals (or, if you take mineral supplements like calcium, magnesium, take 1 hour away from those). Avoid inositol if pregnant, as it may induce uterine contractions.

## Dosage

Inositol range from 5-25 grams a day (5,000-25,000 mg daily), with a typical dose of 12 grams per day (12,000 mg/day). It is usually divided 2-3 times a day (eg, 4,000 mg three times a day).

## Choosing a product

Inositol is available as a capsule or powder. Unfortunately, I am not aware of independent testing of inositol products so cannot recommend specific ones. Most people find it easier to take a therapeutic dose in powdered forms, which is available from GNC, Jarrow Formulas (best price), Source Naturals, and Country Life.

*–Updated 7/28/2024, by Chris Aiken, MD*