As a result of exacting scientific investigations, dietary surveys, and clinical observations, nutritionists seem to be pretty well agreed that, generally speaking, our diet might be improved upon and our need for certain drug store products lessened if the food we eat were to contain a more liberal supply of the vitamin B complex and especially B1 or thiamin chloride. Since the wheat kernel is naturally rich in the B complex and since the products of wheat flour constitute the most commonly consumed foods of the people, nutritionists conclude that the simplest and probably the most economical and effective means of increasing our daily intake of these vitamins is through the medium of bread.

While we are told that eight members of the vitamin B complex or group have been isolated, thiamin or vitamin B1 is one of the members which has been found to be present in insufficient quantities in our ordinary diet.

The vitamin B1 content of foods is measured in International Units, or i.u. Three micrograms (1 million to the gram) of B1 equal 1 i.u. Whole wheat flour contains ordinarily well over 500 International Units per pound. A rather extensive survey made in Canada of what we know as “Second Patent” flours showed that the B1 content ranged all the way from 115 to 194, the average being about 160 i.u. per pound. If a larger percentage of our people ate whole wheat bread, the problem obviously would be much less acute, but according to surveys made it would appear that from 85% to 90% of the bread consumed in Canada is white.

The B1 content of white bread may be increased in any one of three main ways, viz., by the use of high potency yeast, by the addition of synthetic B1 or thiamin, or by the use of flour in which more of the B1 has been retained by a process of milling.

In Great Britain, the Food Ministry, recognizing the importance of having an adequate supply of this important “nerve tonic” in the daily food of the people, has decreed that all flour used in that

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1Contribution from the Cereal Division, Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa, Canada. Presented before the general session of the American Society of Agronomy at the 34th annual meeting held in Washington, D. C., November 13, 1941.
2Dominion Cerealist.