

Vitamin B12 - a new lease on life

By Judit Rajhathy, B.A., RNCP, D.Ac. and Dr. Zoltan P. Rona, M.D., M.Sc.

To “B” or not to “B” – that is the question!

You complain about digestive disturbances and chronic fatigue. After your workout you are far from energized – you are even more tired. You feel like you are just not getting enough air, feel weak and experience numbness and tingling in your hands and feet. The worst part, however, is not being able to remember anything and you feel an ongoing anxiety – worrying about the least little thing. Often you even feel depressed, lethargic. You have ruled out all possible pathology as well as hidden food sensitivities, which can mimic many diseases. Your doctor cannot find a thing wrong with you, is recommending anti-anxiety and anti-depressant drugs, and has neglected to check for B12 deficiency.

According to an ongoing study (Framingham Offspring Study) researchers found that 39% of 3,000 volunteers had plasma B12 levels in the “low normal” range – which, for many people can be detrimental, yet often not treated, since ‘low normal’ is often considered ‘normal’! Hence, blood levels are not always the best way of determining whether one needs supplementation – listing symptoms might be a better way.

Some other symptoms of B12 deficiency include: disorientation, irritability, urinary or fecal incontinence, impotence, abnormal gait, muscle aches, sore mouth and/or tongue, loss of appetite, personality changes, paranoia and quite often, dementia, especially in older individuals. So what would normally be a simple fix can turn into a very serious set of symptoms! Addressing and correcting this deficiency can often help people resume full and normal lives.

Why is B12 deficiency such a common problem for many seniors in particular? Sometimes as we age our absorption of nutrients becomes impaired. This could arise from several factors, one of these being an overgrowth of intestinal flora, or lack of intrinsic factor in the stomach. It could also be the result of inadequate stomach acid, something needed for the absorption of dozens of essential nutrients from foods. Another factor is not getting enough from the diet – often people fall into the ‘tea and toast’ syndrome, which does not include foods that contain high amounts of B12 – pulses, eggs, dairy, fish, and meats. This is also why vegans have to be careful to supplement with B12.

The best way to supplement this important nutrient is with:

1. Injectables
2. Sublingual tablets
3. Nasal gel and now some companies put out B12 patches that stick to skin rather than oral supplementation since many gastrointestinal tracts cannot absorb B12 properly. Most holistic doctors in the north will try what is known as a loading dose. They inject 1ml once a day for two weeks and then reduce to three times a week, and slowly reduce again until a comfortable dose is found, contrary to a more conventional approach, which would entail only one shot every month – a bit of a joke! B12 is water-soluble and does not stay in the body and as a result it is very difficult to overdose. One holistic doctor even remarked that the only way you could ever get a toxic reaction to vitamin B12 would be to fill your bath tub up with B12 and drown in it.

More Vitamin B12 Facts

Cyanocobalamin, hydroxycobalamin and methylcobalamin are different biochemical forms of vitamin B12. There is not much consensus amongst natural health care practitioners about the value of one form over the other but most will agree that all forms are effective at reversing deficiency. Aside from pernicious anemia, deficiency can be associated with irreversible nerve damage and low sperm counts. B12 deficiency also creates a higher risk of heart disease because vitamin B12 prevents the synthesis of high levels of homocysteine, an amino acid that causes hardening of the arteries (atherosclerosis).

Vitamin B12 is mostly found in animal products but small amounts of it exists in cultured soy products, nutritional yeast, yeast extract spreads like marmite, mushrooms, seaweed and a variety of algae products like chlorella, spirulina and blue green algae. The friendly bacteria that reside in the large bowel manufacture some vitamin B12.

Strict vegans, alcoholics, drug addicts, people recovering from surgery or burns and people on medications that suppress stomach acid (e.g. antacids, histamine 2 receptor antagonists like Tagamet and Zantac and proton pump inhibitors like Pariet) should supplement with an oral or sublingual form of B12. Drugs like Metformin, Dilantin, chemotherapeutic drugs, colchicine used to treat gout and barbiturates also increases the requirements for vitamin B12. Those suffering from bowel or pancreatic cancer should supplement with B12 due to eventual deficiency caused by these diseases.

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to watch the video “Sick of Feeling Sick and Tired?”**



Selected Food Sources of Vitamin B12

| Food | Micrograms (mcg) per serving | Percent DV* |
|---|---------------------------------|-------------|
| Liver, beef, braised, 1 slice | 48.0 | 800 |
| Clams, cooked, breaded and fried, 3 ounces | 34.2 | 570 |
| Breakfast cereals, fortified with 100% of the DV for vitamin B12, 1 serving | 6.0 | 100 |
| Trout, rainbow, wild, cooked, 3 ounces | 5.4 | 90 |
| Salmon, sockeye, cooked, 3 ounces | 4.9 | 80 |
| Trout, rainbow, farmed, cooked, 3 ounces | 4.2 | 50 |
| Beef, top sirloin, broiled, 3 ounces | 2.4 | 40 |
| Cheeseburger, double patty and bun, 1 sandwich | 1.9 | 30 |
| Breakfast cereals, fortified with 25% of the DV for vitamin B12, 1 serving | 1.5 | 25 |
| Yogurt, plain, 1 cup | 1.4 | 25 |
| Haddock, cooked, 3 ounces | 1.2 | 20 |
| Tuna, white, 3 ounces | 1.0 | 15 |
| Milk, 1 cup | 0.9 | 15 |
| Cheese, Swiss, 1 ounce | 0.9 | 15 |
| Beef taco, 1 taco | 0.8 | 13 |
| Ham, cured, roasted, 3 ounces | 0.6 | 10 |
| Egg, large, 1 whole | 0.6 | 10 |
| Chicken, roasted, ½ breast | 0.3 | 6 |

*DV = Daily Value. DVs were developed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration

The RDA for vitamin B12 is set by governments at very low levels:

Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDAs) for Vitamin B12

| Age | Male | Female | Pregnancy | Lactation |
|-------------|---------|---------|-----------|-----------|
| 0-6 months | 0.4 mcg | 0.4 mcg | | |
| 7-12 months | 0.5 mcg | 0.5 mcg | | |
| 1-3 years | 0.9 mcg | 0.9 mcg | | |
| 4-8 years | 1.2 mcg | 1.2 mcg | | |
| 9-13 years | 1.8 mcg | 1.8 mcg | | |
| 14+ years | 2.4 mcg | 2.4 mcg | 2.6 mcg | 2.8 mcg |

The minimum oral or sublingual dose needed to correct vitamin B12 deficiency is 500 mcg daily but most clinicians recommend doses as high as 5000 mcgs daily over variable lengths of time.

Megadoses (5000 mcgs or more) have been used by some holistic health professionals to treat asthma, Alzheimer's disease, dementia, fatigue, tendinitis, heel spurs and plantar fasciitis but these uses are controversial.

One of the first signs of success with B12 is more energy and clearer thinking. And over time many of the other symptoms of deficiency begin to resolve. With this in mind, make sure you are also taking a high potency B complex along with your multi-vitamin, especially if you are prone to some of the symptoms listed above. And once you are topped up, full of energy, I'll see you at the gym!

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Consumer Labs B Vitamins Review: <https://www.consumerlab.com/results/print.asp?reviewid=bvitamins>



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To “B” or not to “B” That is the question



Formulated by Zoltan P. Rona MD, MSc

- Fight vitamin B deficiency with these superior B12 tablets
- Excellent for vegetarians
- Help your body to metabolize carbohydrates, fats and proteins
- A great supplement to help form red blood cells
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