



The Importance of B12

B12 also known as cobalamin is an important water-soluble vitamin/nutrient that should be consumed & absorbed in adequate amounts though a diet high in variety & with minimal restriction. Those most likely to develop a B12 deficiency include:

- People with coeliac disease/IBD
- Frequent/restrictive dieters
- People with severe liver damage
- Excessive alcohol intake
- People with low gastric acid levels
- People with digestive issues/parasitic infections

Functions of B12

B12 is used to synthesis fatty acids & DNA synthesis in our peripheral & central nervous systems. Adequate intakes are needed for cell formation & cellular replication, DNA synthesis, nerve function, and metabolism of fats and proteins. It is, therefore, essential for normal blood function and neurological function & can be stored in the liver for many years.

B12 on a blood test

There are two forms that are often shown on blood tests, active B12 & serum B12. Active B12 measures the level of B12 circulating in the blood ready for use while serum B12 measures the need for B12 in the body. It is best to get both tested to get a complete understanding of what the B12 levels are like.

The naturopathically 'optimal' ranges for disease prevention/progression are;

Active B12: 100-150 pmol/L

Serum B12: 600 – 1100 pmol/L

Symptoms of low B12 levels

- Soreness of tongue
- Diarrhoea
- Depression
- Lethargy
- Shortness of breath
- Poor concentration & memory.
- Numbness/tingling in hands/feet

Recommended daily intakes

| Children 1-8 | Adolescences 9-18 | Male adults 19-70+ | Female adults 19-70+ | Pregnant Females |
|----------------|--|--------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| 0.9-1.2 ug/day | 1.8-2.4 ug/day (both male & female) | 2.4 ug/day | 2.4ug/day | 2.6ug/day (lactation 2.8ug/day) |

Improving B12 absorption

Apart from increasing the intake of B12-rich foods, there are a number of other ways to increase B12 levels;

- Eat folate & iron rich foods with B12 as they work together synergistically
- Eat bitter green vegetables or fruit before or during the meal to increase the flow of gastric acid, which will in turn improve absorption of minerals. Grapefruit and bitter green vegetables can all be used.

- Avoid tea (especially black tea) and coffee while deficient within 2 hours of consuming food. The tannins in tea binds make it difficult to absorb many nutrients. Coffee also reduces absorption, especially if taken after a meal. Don't take any supplements with tea or coffee.
- Investigate/work on your gut health

Sources of B12 – Recommended Daily Intake for women is 2.4 ug/day (2.6ug in pregnancy)

| Animal Sources | ug/100g | Other | ug/100g |
|-----------------|---------|-----------|---------|
| Lamb liver | 76.5 | Chlorella | 100 |
| Mussels steamed | 20 | | |
| Oysters | 15 | | |
| Sardines | 8.3 | | |
| Egg | 4.0 | | |
| Beef mince | 3.6 | | |
| Lamb Chop | 3 | | |
| Kangaroo | 2.5 | | |

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