



Aspen Medical Practice

LOW VITAMIN B₁₂ LEVELS

Your recent blood test has indicated that your Vitamin B₁₂ levels are low.

What does Vitamin B₁₂ do?

Vitamin B₁₂ helps to keep the nervous system and blood cells healthy. Vitamin B₁₂ deficiency is when your vitamin B₁₂ levels are too low.

What are the symptoms of low vitamin B₁₂?

Low vitamin B₁₂ can cause anaemia which can cause tiredness; lack of energy; breathlessness; dizziness and headaches.

It is also possible to have low vitamin B₁₂ without anaemia which may cause symptoms such as pins and needles; disturbed vision; mouth ulcers; tongue soreness; memory difficulties and muscle weakness.

Where do I get vitamin B₁₂?

It is only naturally found in animal products including meat, eggs, fish, milk and dairy products. Plants do not make B₁₂ and so will not provide this vitamin.

Foods richest in B₁₂ include:

- ***Liver and organ meats***
- ***Shellfish***
- ***Clams***
- ***Oysters***

If you are sea-food averse, B₁₂ can also be found in:

- Lamb
- Beef
- Eggs
- Cheese

Causes of Vitamin B₁₂ deficiency

For many people, the cause of their deficiency is not taking enough in their diet especially if they do not eat animal products. Some people are unable to absorb Vitamin B₁₂ from food and some take medications which can reduce the absorption of Vitamin B₁₂ from the stomach e.g. metformin (which is used for diabetes) or omeprazole (which is often prescribed for indigestion).

Treatment of Vitamin B12 deficiency

- The good news is that there is evidence that shows that oral B12 supplements are just as effective intramuscular injections of B12.
- Please purchase over the counter either **Cyanocobalamin or Methylcobalamin (1 mg daily)** – from either pharmacy, health food shop (like Holland and Barrett's) or on-line (Amazon has some very competitively priced good quality products).
- Please recheck your B12 and full blood count levels in 6 months' time.
- When you have completed the course, we would advise that you try to include foods that are rich in B12 in your diet (see above) and recheck your levels again in 12 month's time, or sooner if you start to feel your original symptoms returning.
- If you are a vegan, you may need to purchase oral B12 over the counter from the pharmacy or from a reliable source on the internet. We would recommend ongoing B12 supplementation. As you do not consume any animal foods as a vegan, you are at high risk of your B12 levels dropping again without ongoing use of an oral supplement.

If you have any questions or are unsure as to the cause of your Vitamin D deficiency, please arrange a routine appointment with your doctor.