

VITAMIN B-12 Deficiencies health & wellness

How to tell if you're deficient and what to do about it...

By Nisha Jackson, PhD, NP, HHP

If you are you suffering from poor focus, loss of concentration, fatigue, irritability or anxiety, it very well might be that a vitamin deficiency could be to blame! Vitamin B-12 deficiency is one of the most commonly overlooked medical conditions. Vitamin supplementation is widely viewed as unnecessary in the health care community. Ideally, we should receive all of our essential vitamin minerals, amino acids and nutrients through a well-balanced diet, but this so often is not the case. The lifestyle habits of Americans with sugary drinks, processed foods, high stress, poor sleep, and imbalanced gut leaves us depleted and lacking the essentials to feel balanced and well. By depriving ourselves of nutrients that keep our bodies functioning optimally, unexpected side effects are starting to rear their heads.

Some of the symptoms of vitamin B-12 deficiency include:

- **Body Pain** - This pain will not improve with medical intervention such as chiropractic or physical therapy care.
- **Brain Fog** - Vitamin B-12 deficiencies can cause memory loss, confusion, depression and, in extreme cases, dementia. It can also affect your balance. Don't write yourself off as clumsy!
- **Muscle Weakness** - This one can come on gradually, so it's important to always pay attention to your body's warning signals. You may feel weak, lightheaded or tired.
- **Heart Palpitations** - If it feels like your heart regularly skips a beat, you need to seek medical attention.
- **Feeling Colder than Usual** - Our body needs B-12 to produce healthy red blood cells. These cells are responsible for carrying oxygen molecules to our extremities. If these cells can't fulfill this function, you may be more sensitive to cold weather. This condition can also be linked to numbness in the extremities.
- **Smooth Tongue** - This one is peculiar but important, nonetheless! It is not common to have a smooth tongue. In fact, the tongue is supposed to be textured. If your tongue is smoother than that of your partner, child or colleague, it's time to get your blood levels tested.

Most people would agree that they've experienced one or many of these symptoms. B-12 is essential to produce vital brain chemicals, so low B-12 levels can leave you feeling anxious, depressed, sleepless, and lacking brain focus and concentration. A simple blood test can easily determine if the underlying issue is a vitamin B-12 deficiency, and treatment is simple! As previously mentioned, relying on diet is not the best way to ensure you're receiving your vitamins. Factors like poor gut health or an exclusively plant-based diet directly impact how much B-12 you receive. If you suffer from poor gut health, it's unlikely your body breaks down food well enough to absorb any nutritional benefits. When eating an exclusively plant-based diet, there is limited exposure to foods containing B-12 because it is most commonly found in animal proteins such as beef, liver, chicken, fish, shellfish, and dairy, leaving our vegan friends to rely on fortified cereals. Even this is problematic because those cereals overwhelm the gut with sugars, slowing a healthy gut and reducing absorption.

A few conditions that might predispose you to vitamin B-12 deficiencies.

1. People recovering from gastric bypass surgery are at high risk for vitamin B-12 malabsorption because the stomach and gut ar-

en't fully functional during recovery. The lack of education about nutrient deficiencies leave these patients suffering from an easily preventable condition. It is recommended that patients receive B-complex injections and/or take sublingual drops.

2. Certain medications such as Metformin or Glucophage that treat prediabetes and diabetes are known to reduce the body's ability to absorb B-12.
3. Pregnancy can deplete your B-12 reserves. All pregnant and nursing women should be taking a B-complex supplement, especially if you're eating an exclusively plant-based diet. Of course, it is always best to discuss any supplementation with your health care provider before starting.

If we can't get what we need from food, what other methods of administration are there? Supplementing regularly with B-12 and/or B-complex. Your options are sublingual drops, capsules, or weekly to monthly B-12 shots. All are great options, but the sublingual drops and shots (available at OnePeak Medical) have the best absorption and efficiency at improving B-12 deficiencies.

Best of balance! **Nisha Jackson, Ph.D., NP, HHP**

Founder of OnePeak Medical Clinics - Oregon/Texas; author of Brilliant Burnout OnePeakMedical.com



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Nisha Jackson
PhD, MS, NP, HHP
Founder and CEO of One Peak Medical

Kari Rocco
MS, FNP-C

98 E. 11th Avenue, Eugene, Oregon
www.onepeakmedical.com

For a consult, call: 541-204-4745
or email: eugene@onepeakmedical.com