

Vitamin B₁₂ — Information for Patients

Vitamin B₁₂ — Why do you need it?

- To form red blood cells
- For normal functioning of the nervous system
- As a requirement for nutrient metabolism
- For the growth and development of children
- To help make the body's genetic material
- May help lower the risk of heart disease by decreasing homocysteine levels

Vitamin B₁₂ — How much do you need?

Adult men & women 2.4 mcg*

Pregnant women 2.6 mcg*

Lactating women 2.8 mcg*

* Recommended dietary allowance (RDA)

Who is at risk of vitamin B₁₂ deficiency?

...and what to do about it

- People over 50 years of age...** Stomach gastric acid secretion decreases as we get older. Gastric acid is important in the digestion of vitamin B₁₂ from protein-containing foods. *What to do? Consume vitamin B₁₂-fortified foods.*
- People who have GI disorders...** This includes celiac disease, stomach or intestinal surgery, low stomach-acid production, or pernicious anemia due to malabsorption. *What to do? Talk to your doctor about having serum B₁₂ measurements.*
- People who eat a strict vegetarian diet...** A strictly plant-based diet lacks vitamin B₁₂. Unless vegetarians eat non-animal foods fortified with B₁₂ or take a synthetic vitamin B₁₂ supplement, they are at risk of getting B₁₂ deficiency. *What to do? Consume vitamin B₁₂-fortified foods.*
- People who regularly take medications that inhibit gastric acid secretions...** Some examples are Omeprazole (Prilosec) and Ranitidine (Zantac). If you are not sure about your medications, check with your doctor. *What to do? If you take these medications every day, talk to your doctor about serum B₁₂ measurements.*
- People who abuse alcohol** are frequently found to have vitamin B₁₂ deficiency.

Vitamin B₁₂-fortified foods include:

- ♦ **Cereals** (eg, Total, Smart Start, Just Right)
- ♦ **Functional food bars** (eg, Power Bars, Luna Bars)
- ♦ **Textured vegetable protein foods** (eg, Harvest Burgers, Morning Star Vegetable Chicken Nuggets)