

Vitamin B12 Deficiency

What is it?

Vitamin B12 deficiency means you don't have enough vitamin B12 in your body. Our bodies need vitamin B12 to keep your blood and nerve cells healthy. Not having enough vitamin B12 in your body can make you feel tired or weak.

Your body does not produce vitamin B12, but it is in a lot of the foods you eat. Vitamin B12 is found in animal products like fish, meat, poultry, milk and eggs. It is also added to some soy, rice and nut foods.

There are a few reasons why you may have a vitamin B12 deficiency. You may have a medical condition which stops your body from absorbing vitamin B12. Other reasons include the medication you take, or you may not be eating enough foods with vitamin B12.

What will my GP do now?

Your GP will try to find the cause of your low vitamin B12 levels. You may need to do more blood tests. Depending on the type of vitamin B12 deficiency, your GP may recommend different treatment options.

Treatment may include five injections of vitamin B12 within the first two-to-three weeks. Your GP may then recommend taking a vitamin B12 supplement daily, and re-assess if your symptoms do not improve.

Your GP may refer you to a dietitian if your low vitamin B12 levels are linked to your diet.

What will my GP do in the future?

You will need to see your GP after four-to-eight weeks to check if the treatment is working. You may also need to see them again at six-to-12 months to check your body is still absorbing vitamin B12 effectively.

It is not common to need treatment for a long time. However, if your body does not absorb vitamin B12 effectively, your GP may refer you to a specialist called a gastroenterologist.

What questions could I ask my doctor?

- Do I need to have vitamin B12 injections?*
- How often will I need to have them?*
- Are there any side effects?*



What can I do?

Keep the check-ups with your GP for your vitamin B12 injections and blood tests. Tell your GP if you are taking any other medications or if your symptoms change. You should also consider eating more food with vitamin B12 in it.

What supports are available?

Your GP can refer you to a public gastroenterology or haematology clinic at a hospital in your area. Private specialists are also an option.

Where can I learn more?

- **Patient.info** – Vitamin B12 deficiency and pernicious anaemia: [patient.info](https://www.patient.info)