

Dietary Sources of Vitamin B12

Vitamin B12, or cobalamin as it is called in the scientific community, plays a significant role in the synthesis of DNA and RNA. It also has a neurological purpose, as well as an aid in the metabolism of fat, carbohydrates and red blood cells. A deficiency in vitamin B12 can contribute to a wide variety of hematological and neuropsychiatric disorders that can often be reversed by early diagnosis and prompt treatment. However, if not treated in a timely manner, vitamin B12 deficiency can often have serious repercussions.

The best way to counteract vitamin B12 deficiency is to eat food containing vitamin B12. However, vitamin B12 is not largely available in plants, unless these plants have been contaminated with soil microorganisms. As such, vegetarians are much more sensitive to the risk of becoming vitamin B12 deficient because the foods they eat are not foods high in vitamin B12.

How Much Vitamin B12 is Enough?

The recommended consumption of vitamin B12 is actually very low. Humans only need about 2 micrograms of this vitamin in order to make full use of all its benefits. However, many still suffer from deficiency mostly thanks to poor absorption of the vitamin.

Foods With Vitamin B12

Foods with vitamin B12 are mostly animal-based foods. A diet of foods rich in vitamin B12, such as dairy products or eggs, provides adequate vitamin B12. For vegetarians, fortified food containing vitamin B12 are an option. These foods include Nutri-Grain, some brands of nutritional yeast, and some soy analogs.

The best way to find other foods containing vitamin B12 is to read labels of products in the supermarket. Due to a shocking number of vitamin B12 deficient cases, many foods are now fortified with vitamin B12 to counteract the deficiency.

Tempeh and sea vegetables, like spirulina and nori, may also be foods containing vitamin B12. However, their B12 content often differs so do not rely on them as good sources of vitamin B12. After analysis, it has been found that the B12 content in sea vegetables seems to be the presence of compounds that are structurally similar to B12, known as B12 analogues.

Supplementation is also recommended for those who do not eat dairy products, eggs, or fortified foods regularly. Nevertheless, some researchers have found that B12 supplements such as spirulina may in fact increase the risk of B12 deficiency disease than alleviate it. This deficiency is due to the fact that the B12 analogues in spirulina often compete with B12 and inhibit metabolism.