

B-12

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Vitamin B-12: **Demystified.**

By Scott Popyk, RPh MBA FIACP

Integrative physicians often utilize vitamins therapeutically. This edition of HDRX News introduces you to a nutrient that patients are often deficient in: Vitamin B-12

What is Vitamin B-12?

Vitamin B12 is a water-soluble B vitamin which is necessary for human metabolism, blood cell formation, and immune and nervous system function. Various natural and “active” forms of B12 are found in the body including hydroxocobalamin, methylcobalamin and adenosylcobalamin.

Do doctors write prescriptions for B-12?

Yes, physicians who prescribe biomedical treatments (i.e. nutritional therapies) often prescribe hydroxocobalamin or methylcobalamin rather than synthetic B12 (also known as cyanocobalamin) because these are the active vitamin forms used by the body. Physicians may prescribe vitamin B12 in cases of malabsorption or when there is insufficient dietary intake. Other times physicians prescribe B12 to achieve specific therapeutic objectives such as reducing heart attack risk, treating diabetic neuropathy or to improve detoxification processes in patients whose processes are impaired.

What are some natural sources of B-12?

Sources of B12 include meat, fish and dairy products; therefore, vegetarians may be at special risk of developing deficiency.

What if I am deficient in Vitamin B-12?

Supplementation of B12 can be achieved with oral, intranasal or injectable dosing. Oral supplementation is somewhat limited in application due to poor absorption. For those squeamish of needles, intranasal offers improved absorption to oral dosing but total dose is limited.



Supplementing Vitamin B-12

What is the most effective way to supplement B-12?

Injectable B-12 is the gold standard for high dose, therapeutic administration.

The idea of B12 injection can conjure up thoughts of pain or discomfort. This is because for many years it was thought that injections needed to be administered by deep intramuscular injection. Fortunately, it has been learned that B12 is well absorbed through a relatively painless, shallow injection into the fat tissue between skin and muscle. This method uses a tiny insulin syringe and is generally comfortable enough that needle adverse children can be injected while they sleep.

Where is the B-12 injected?

Suitable injection sites include top of the buttocks, thigh, back or abdomen. The injection should be given by inserting the needle at a 20-30 degree angle to the injection site. The site is swabbed with alcohol first then loosely pinched to create a fold of supple flesh.

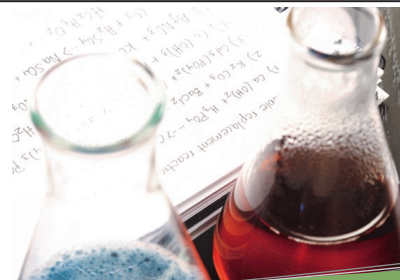
What should be expected after the injection?

Since B12 is red colored it sometimes appears to stain skin at the injection site. Patients should not be alarmed at this as the B12 will dissipate within a day or so. Following the injection, patients should expect to see urine turn a slight pink hue. This is a normal event.

Increasingly, physicians may prescribe vitamins instead of drugs to treat various medical conditions. The use of injectable B12 is just one example of the therapeutic use of natural products.

If you have specific questions about Vitamin B-12, give us a call.

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