

Symptoms of Vitamin B12 Deficiency

The Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences is the agency who sets the recommendations for vitamin B12 intake, which they furnish in the Dietary Reference Intakes (DRIs). Two national surveys, the Continuing Survey of Food Intakes by Individuals (CSFII 1994-96) and the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES III-1998-94) have been conducted to determine how many children and adults in the United States are taking the recommended amount of vitamin B12 and are exhibiting symptoms of vitamin B12 deficiency. The results show that most children and adults consume the suggested amount; however, vitamin B12 deficiency symptoms may still occur.

Symptoms of vitamin B12 deficiency are apparent not because people are taking less vitamin B12 than recommended. Instead, the reason lies in the fact some individuals showing symptoms of vitamin B12 deficiency are unable to absorb vitamin B12 from food. Strict vegetarians or vegans are also at risk of displaying vitamin B12 deficiency symptoms, because they do not consume any animal products, which are rich sources of the vitamin.

It is the consensus of scientists and researchers alike that most people who develop vitamin B12 deficiency symptoms are those who have an underlying stomach or intestinal disorder. These two conditions appear to limit the absorption of vitamin B12, leading to a deficiency.

Vitamin B12 is often discharged from foods and supplements through stomach acid secretion. If there is a problem with this bodily function, then it typically results to lower rate of vitamin B12 absorption. At times, the only symptom of these intestinal disorders is a subtle reduction of function of the cognitive part of the brain, resulting from early B12 deficiency. Anemia and dementia may eventually follow.

The Primary Signs, Symptoms, and Health Problems

Deficiencies in vitamin B12 can be detected by the following signs, symptoms, and health problems:

- * Vitamin B12 deficiency symptoms include difficulty in maintaining balance, dementia, poor memory, confusion, depression, and soreness of the mouth or tongue.
- * There may be neurological changes associated with the deficiency as well, like numbness and tingling in the hands and feet.
- * Anemia, constipation, tiredness, loss of appetite, weakness, and weight loss.
- * For babies, the signs of vitamin B12 deficiency include failure to thrive, delayed development, movement disorders, and megaloblastic anemia.

A good number of these vitamin B12 deficiency symptoms are general and, therefore, may only be results of a variety of medical conditions, not solely a vitamin B12 deficiency. Thus, it is important to have a doctor evaluate these symptoms prior to leaping to conclusions. Appropriate medical attention should be followed.