



# Vitamin B12 Deficiency

## What is vitamin B12?

Vitamin B12 is a water-soluble vitamin that is naturally present in some foods, such as meat, dairy and fish. It is crucial for the proper formation of red blood cells, as well as proper function of the nervous system including the brain.

## Symptoms

**The most common symptoms of vitamin B12 deficiency are:**

- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath
- Palpitations
- Poor sense of balance
- A sore mouth and/or tongue
- Pale or yellowish skin

**Common neuropsychiatric symptoms may include:**

- Memory loss
- Depression
- Ataxia

## Risks

**Those most at risk and who may require testing for a vitamin B12 deficiency include:**

- Over 65s
- Vegetarians/Vegans
- Diabetic patients taking Metformin
- Individuals with underactive thyroid due to Hashimoto's
- Individuals with certain gastrointestinal disorders, e.g.,
  - chronic atrophic gastritis
  - pernicious anaemia
  - taking PPI (Proton Pump Inhibitors)
  - Crohn's or coeliac disease
- Individuals post surgery of the gastrointestinal tract
- Individuals with a low caloric and/or high alcohol intake

**If left untreated, vitamin B12 deficiency will lead to:**

- Severe anaemia of the blood cells

**and can also result in:**

- Varying degrees of neuropathy or nerve damage
- Mental changes that range from tiredness to confusion, irritability and dementia

## Testing

The most common method of testing for a vitamin B12 deficiency is to have a simple blood test.