

## Vitamin B12

### What is Vitamin B12 and Vitamin B12 Deficiency?

Vitamin B12 is a vitamin found in meat, eggs, dairy produce, salmon, cod and fortified foods, such as some breakfast cereals. It plays a role in ensuring that the nervous system functions normally and that the body is able to produce enough red blood cells.

B12 deficiency can cause a range of symptoms from mild to severe, or it can be detected as a finding on a blood test without causing any symptoms. Deficiency can result from inadequate dietary intake or impaired absorption due to conditions such as pernicious anaemia, bariatric surgery or certain medications.

### How is Vitamin B12 Deficiency usually treated?

For the majority of people, the treatment for B12 deficiency is to receive some 'loading doses' of B12 via injection, followed by 3 monthly injections. For some people, where the deficiency is caused by diet, treatment may be via oral supplements. For those who have significant neurological impairment at the time of diagnosis, they may need 2 monthly injections.

### Why has the recommended treatment been changed now?

At the present time, we are facing an unprecedented situation due to the Covid19 pandemic. As a result of this, we have had to review a number of our routine services and make significant changes to the way in which we are working. This has been necessary to minimise the risk of exposure to Covid19 for both patients and staff. The national guidance is to move to remote consulting wherever possible, seeing patients face to face only if essential and all other avenues have been explored.

In the case of B12 injections, we have sought advice from Dr Toth, Consultant Haematologist at Chesterfield Royal Hospital. He has recommended that we extend the interval between B12 injection from 3 to 6 months. Given the extremely high B12 levels that we know patients on B12 injections have, there is no clinical concern that this would result in patients coming to harm. This is consistent with the advice from the British Society for Haematology, which suggests patients have sufficient stores for up to 12 months. We will therefore not be offering patients B12 injections sooner than 6 months from their last injection. This change is an interim measure and we will be resuming the standard treatment of 3 monthly injections as soon as it is safe to do so.

### What can I do while I'm waiting for my next B12 injection?

We understand that some patients may have concerns about this and may notice when they are past their usual due date owing to the marked feeling of wellbeing the injection gives them. If you feel you require additional treatment during the period between your usual and rescheduled injection dates, you can purchase oral supplements over the counter. We do not endorse any specific brand of B12, however, in line with the British Dietetic Association advice, we would be recommending a dose of 1000 micrograms a day. You may see this written as 1mg or as 1000µg on the bottle or packet. These can be purchased online from sites such as myprotein.com, Holland and Barrett and Amazon.