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# B12: essential for aging well

This “anti-aging” vitamin protects against Alzheimer’s, stroke, and gene damage

**Vitamin B<sub>12</sub>** is a component of numerous reactions that protect our genes, enhance cognitive function, and ward off cardiovascular disease. According to the Department of Agriculture, 33 percent of Americans don’t get enough B<sub>12</sub>, and the actual number may be higher. If you are age 65 or older, you have a high risk of atrophic gastritis, a digestive condition that interferes with B<sub>12</sub> absorption.

**ALIAS:** Several forms of B<sub>12</sub> are available as supplements, including cyanocobalamin, hydroxocobalamin, and methylcobalamin.

Many health experts consider hydroxocobalamin and methylcobalamin to be the more natural forms of the vitamin.

*[Editor’s note: Hydroxocobalamin is hard to find; you may need to go through a holistic practitioner to purchase it.]*

**BENEFITS:** Research has revealed multiple health benefits to vitamin B<sub>12</sub>. **METHYLATION.** Vitamin B<sub>12</sub>—along with folic acid and other B vitamins—plays an essential role in methylation, which is needed to replicate genes and regulate their activity,

protect against cardiovascular diseases, and make neurotransmitters and phospholipids.

**CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASES.** Low levels of vitamin B<sub>12</sub> lead to increases in blood levels of methylmalonic acid, which may boost the risk of heart disease, stroke, and Alzheimer’s disease. To protect yourself, take a supplement with vitamins B<sub>12</sub> and B<sub>6</sub>, and folic acid.

**GENE PROTECTOR.** People with low levels of vitamin B<sub>12</sub> experience a high rate of gene damage, which accelerates cell aging and increases the risk of cancer. Michael Fenech, PhD, a researcher at Australia’s Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization, found that supplemental B<sub>12</sub> and folic acid could reduce gene damage.

**MOOD BOOSTER.** Experiencing a “down day” or the “blues,” but not serious enough to call it depression? Some physicians recommend 500 mg of L-tyrosine combined with 500 mcg of sublingual vitamin B<sub>12</sub>.

**MENTAL HEALTH.** Low levels of vitamin B<sub>12</sub> are considered a type of “nutritional anemia” that may result in fatigue, mental fuzziness, and symptoms of senility.

Every person with Alzheimer’s symptoms should be tested for a B<sub>12</sub> deficiency—or simply be given sublingual tablets to see if

## SHINE WITH HEALTHY ENERGY

**Jacob Teitelbaum MD**, author of the best-selling book *From Fatigued to Fantastic!* and the free iPhone app “Cures A–Z,” shares advice for boosting energy naturally.

Are you one of the 31 percent of adults suffering from ongoing fatigue? Tired of being hooked on coffee or energy drinks? Here’s how you can get real energy—and feel great. Simply remember the word “SHINE!”

**SLEEP:** Get adequate sleep, preferably eight to nine hours a night. Have insomnia? Try a sleep aid with L-theanine, valerian, passionflower, and/or hops.

**HORMONES:** Lab tests miss the large majority of people with hormonal deficiencies. It’s better to go by symptoms. If you’re tired, achy, have experienced weight gain, and are cold intolerant, it suggests a thyroid issue. Irritability when hungry (what I call, “Feed me now, or I’ll kill you!” syndrome) suggests that you need adrenal support.

To help your thyroid, add a good iodine supplement. An excellent one is Tri-Iodine by EuroPharma (6.25–12.5 mg per day). Don’t take more or it can suppress your thyroid. For exhausted adrenals, try a mix of adrenal glandulars, vitamin C, pantothenic acid, and licorice. In addition, cut out sugar, but don’t restrict your salt intake.

**INFECTIONS:** Especially yeast (Candida) infections. Often, probiotics can be beneficial.

**NUTRITION:** Take a good multivitamin, Maca root and cordyceps mushroom can enhance energy and stamina and counter adrenal fatigue. Ribose (or D-Ribose) powder can dramatically increase energy. In a recent study of 257 people with chronic fatigue syndrome, ribose increased energy an average of 61 percent after three weeks. Try adding 5 g of ribose to water or juice daily.

**EXERCISE:** Preferably, do some kind of activity outdoors. The advice to avoid sunshine is contributing to widespread vitamin D deficiency. Avoid sunburn—not sunshine!





 go shopping!



**BLUEBONNET NUTRITION EARTH SWEET METHYL-COBALAMIN** has 5,000 mcg of this highly absorbable form of B<sub>12</sub>. The chewable tablets in Natural Raspberry Flavor are sweetened with a mix of juice concentrates.

**ENZYMATIC THERAPY B12 INFUSION** contains 1,000 mcg of methylcobalamin in a tasty cherry chewable form that is absorbed quickly for all-day energy. The formula is gluten free and vegetarian.

**JARROW FORMULAS METHYL B-12** has 5,000 mcg of methylcobalamin in a delicious cherry-flavored lozenge. Xylitol is used to sweeten the lozenges, which you can chew or let dissolve in your mouth.

*tip!*

Because aging and common over-the-counter and prescription drugs interfere with vitamin B<sub>12</sub> absorption, it's worthwhile to take larger amounts than the recommended daily dose (only 2.4 mcg).

they ease symptoms. Low vitamin B<sub>12</sub> levels are common among people with early forms of Alzheimer's.

#### BACKGROUND CHECK:

Some drugs interfere with the absorption or assimilation of vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, setting the stage for often-unrecognized deficiencies. These include heartburn and acid-blocking medications, antibiotics, and oral contraceptives. Nitrous oxide, often used in anesthesia, destroys vitamin B<sub>12</sub>. A study described in the *British Medical Journal* found that the longer people with diabetes took the drug metformin, the more likely they were to experience a B<sub>12</sub> deficiency.

**CLINICAL PEARL:** Japanese doctors treated six multiple sclerosis patients by injecting them with 60 mg of B<sub>12</sub> (a massive dose) daily for six months. Although the patients' muscle function didn't improve, their visual and hearing problems did.

**GLEANINGS:** Traditionally, B<sub>12</sub> deficiency is identified by noting the presence of megaloblastic anemia, in which red blood cells are abnormally enlarged. But this change occurs only after years of vitamin B<sub>12</sub> deficiency. A more useful test measures methylmalonic acid, which rises when "functional" levels of B<sub>12</sub> are low.

**HEADS UP:** A study in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* found that large amounts of supplemental vitamin B<sub>12</sub> are needed to correct a deficiency. The vitamin depends on a molecule-called "intrinsic factor" for absorption through the gut. Sublingual B<sub>12</sub> seems to work as well as injections and bypass the need for intrinsic factor.

**WHAT SHOULD YOU TAKE:** The recommended daily amount of B<sub>12</sub> for adults is a scant 2.4 mcg. But because aging and common drugs interfere with B<sub>12</sub>, it's likely worthwhile to take 500–1,000 mcg daily. The vitamin is exceptionally safe.

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