

Vitamin B12

Vitamin B12, also known as cobalamin, is an essential vitamin mainly found in animal foods such as red meat, chicken, fish and dairy. We need vitamin B12 to keep our nervous system healthy, to produce energy, and to support growth and development.

Food sources of vitamin B12:

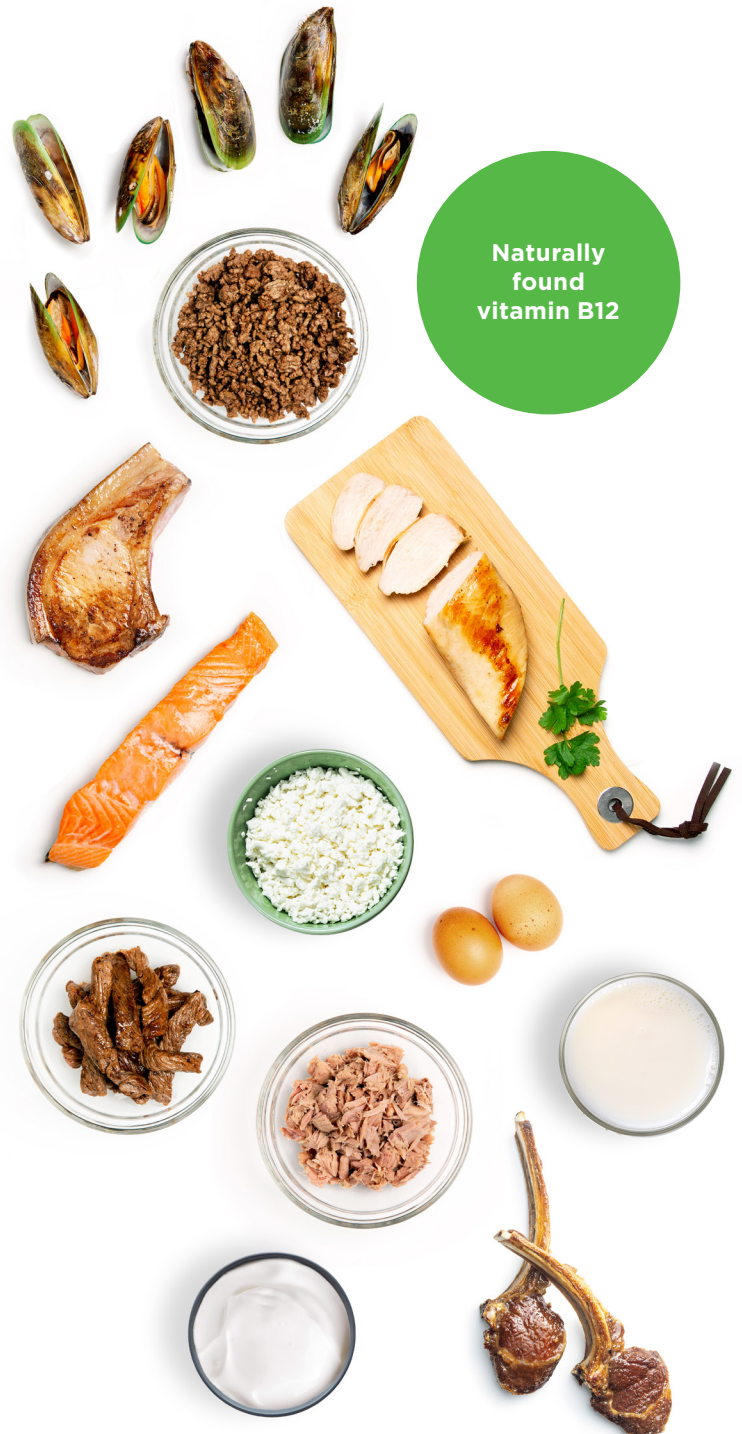
Vitamin B12 is naturally found in animal foods such as fish, red meat, chicken, eggs and dairy products. Plant sources do not contain vitamin B12, although some breakfast cereals, nutritional yeasts, and other food products are fortified with vitamin B12.

Eating a varied, balanced diet with up to 500g per week of cooked, lean red meat (which equals about 700-750g raw) is a great way to get enough vitamin B12.

How much vitamin B12 do I need?

The amount of vitamin B12 you need each day depends on your age and life stage. For instance, more vitamin B12 is needed during pregnancy to support the growth and development of the baby.

Life Stage	Vitamin B12 ($\mu\text{g/day}$)
Infants: 0 - 6 months	0.4
Infants: 7 - 12 months	0.5
Children: 1 - 3 years	0.9
Children: 4 - 8 years	1.2
Children: 9 - 13 years	1.8
14+ years	2.4
Pregnancy	2.6
Breastfeeding	2.8



Who needs more vitamin B12?

There are certain people who may not get enough vitamin B12 or may struggle to absorb it, such as:

- Vegetarians and vegans, as vitamin B12 is found almost exclusively in animal-based foods like red meat, chicken, dairy, eggs, and fish
- Children and teenagers
- People who are pregnant or breastfeeding
- Older adults as the ability to absorb vitamin B12 can reduce with age
- People who have had gastric surgery or with certain conditions such as pernicious anemia, Crohn's disease, coeliac disease
- People taking certain medications that interfere with vitamin B12 absorption

To help prevent or correct long-term health complications or deficiencies, nutrition changes to include more vitamin B12 rich foods and supplementation may be prescribed by a registered health professional.

Signs of vitamin B12 deficiency

Vitamin B12 deficiency may go unnoticed for a while because we store large amounts in the liver.

Over time, common signs and symptoms include:

- Fatigue and weakness
- Pale skin
- Shortness of breath
- Mouth ulcers
- Pins and needles
- Weight loss
- Reduced appetite
- Cognitive decline

If you suspect your vitamin B12 levels may be low, it is important to seek advice from a registered health professional.

What's on the menu for vitamin B12-rich eating?

Breakfast:

2 eggs on 2 pieces of wholegrain toast (1.6 µg)

Morning tea:

½ cup natural yoghurt with fruit (0.4 µg)

Lunch:

100g canned tuna with salad, brown rice and avocado (4.2 µg)

Afternoon tea:

4 wholegrain crackers with 1 slice of cheese (0.9 µg)

Dinner:

Cobb salad with lamb rump (1.5 µg)

Check out [recipes.co.nz](https://www.recipes.co.nz) for more delicious recipes.

Total vitamin B12
in this menu
8.6 µg



Lean red meat can be described as nature's power pack; even a small serve has plenty of nutrients. It is high in vitamin B12, and an important part of a healthy balanced diet, alongside wholegrains, fruits, and vegetables.

Health problems, including vitamin B12 deficiency, may result from an inadequate diet. They may also have a medical basis unrelated to diet. The information in this fact sheet is only general and is not to be taken as a substitute for medical advice in relation to specific symptoms or health concerns.

For a list of references please visit:
beeflambnz.co.nz/health-nutrition-resources
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