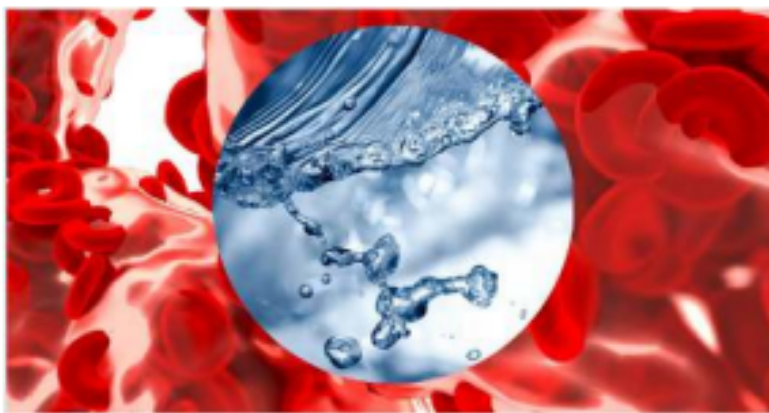




Vitamin B12

For those on a plant-based diet, the topic of vitamin B12 always crops up. It can be a stumbling block since it is not well understood and there are many myths surrounding it. So this month we take a close look at vitamin B12.

Vitamin B12 in the body



Vitamin B12 is soluble in water. This allows it to travel freely through the body and any excess will normally be excreted by the kidneys. It's needed for the formation of red blood cells, DNA synthesis and neurological function. B12 digestion and absorption requires the synthesis of intrinsic factor (a glycoprotein secreted in the stomach), hydrochloric acid, and certain enzymes that break down proteins and peptides. This process enables B12 to be absorbed into the bloodstream.

Vitamin B12 in nature

Let's get down to basics - it may surprise you to learn that vitamin B12 is produced by bacteria, not by animals. Animals and humans must obtain it directly or indirectly from bacteria. You will find B12 in soil, manure and unsanitary water but, of course, we don't want to be consuming these. Minute amounts are also produced naturally in our intestines but it appears that we do not make sufficient amounts to meet our needs so this cannot be relied upon. Nevertheless, with an optimal diet, we may be able to increase the amount in our intestines over time. Animal foods contain vitamin B12 due to the fact that they live closer to the sources of bacteria and can, therefore, obtain it directly. Animals that are confined on factory farms will have their feed supplemented with B12.

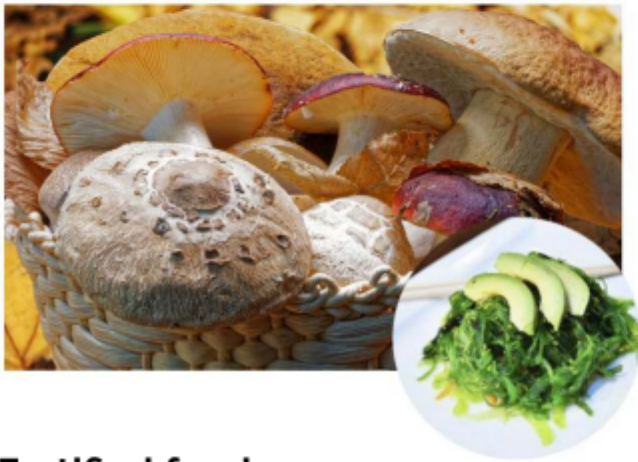
Farming methods



In the past, vitamin B12 was more reliably present in plant foods due to gentler farming practices. Nowadays, high sanitation methods, like irradiation, aim to improve the safety and extend the shelf life of foods by reducing or eliminating micro-organisms. Whilst there are benefits to this, unfortunately all traces of vitamin B12 are removed. Additionally, the soil has been exposed to antibiotics and pesticides meaning that most plant foods are no longer reliable sources of this bacterial product.

Foods containing vitamin B12

There are some plant foods that still contain vitamin B12 such as seaweed, like nori and chlorella and certain mushrooms like shitaki and lion's mane. Lion's mane is not a regular store item but shitaki mushrooms are readily available.



Fortified foods

Fortunately, many plant-based foods are fortified with vitamin B12 so you need never go without this vital ingredient. Here are some foods that are often fortified but be sure to read the labels because it varies between brands: nutritional yeast, vegan spreads, plant-based milks, cereals, tempeh, plant-based meats. Interestingly the fortification of foods is achieved via a crystalline form of B12, which has an advantage over the form found in animal foods because it is easier for our bodies to absorb.

Vitamin B12 supplement

I'm not a fan of supplements but in the case of vitamin B12, it is wise to take a supplement for all of the reasons I have outlined. I've noticed that the pills come in very concentrated doses – please check the label. Sometimes each pill can be many times the recommended daily amount and this would put stress on your kidneys, so I would suggest crushing each pill into several smaller pieces. I, personally, take a small piece of a supplement about 3 times/week along with eating fortified foods on a daily basis. We need minute amounts of B12 but it is, nevertheless, essential.



A popular B12 supplement for vegans is cyanocobalamin; it is not made with any animal-based filler materials. So, if you found B12 to be a stumbling block on your food journey, I trust that with your now greater understanding of this vitamin, you are feeling confident and super charged! Speaking personally, this deeper understanding boosted my confidence in a plant-based diet.

How to achieve your RDA



I discovered that the almond milk I was drinking was fortified with vitamin B12 and, if I drank 250ml/day, I would be getting 50% of my recommended daily amount (RDA). I found my other 50% in one teaspoon of nutritional yeast which I purchase from the health food store. I sprinkle this on vegetables, in soups, on spaghetti sauce, etc. It is important that you do not cook the nutritional yeast since this damages the vitamin. Don't include it in the cooking pot; sprinkle it on top of your food when it is served on the plate. This simple strategy provides you with 100% of the recommended daily amount that is advised for good health.

Go Vegan Successfully

Book Chapters:

- 1 - My story
- 2 - How long will it take to go vegan?
- 3 - Giving up meat
- 4 - Fish facts
- 5 - Dairy products
- 6 - Eggs and honey
- 7 - Protein and amino acids
- 8 - Calcium
- 9 - Iron
- 10 - Vitamin B12
- 11 - Family meals
- 12 - Social dining and shopping
- 13 - Festive meals
- 14 - Vegan transition
- 15 - Common concerns and remedies
- 16 - More than a diet
- 17 - Interviews with leaders & visionaries
- 18 - What's next?



There are many vegan recipe books and books depicting the suffering of animals but not many that actually guide you, step-by-step, to go vegan. This book is full of practical tips and, having been written by someone who not only lives the vegan lifestyle but is a recognized plant-based diet specialist and a Dissertation Professor, with a PhD in Natural Medicine, you can be assured of expert guidance.

It's not always easy making the switch to a vegan diet. There's so much to consider: Will I be getting sufficient protein? Will my bones begin to suffer if I don't drink milk? How can I make sure I am getting all my vitamins? What will my family and friends think? How will I cope if I'm the only one in my household going vegan? This book answers all of these questions and much, much more!

The book is easy to read, well laid out, nicely illustrated and contains a wealth of information. There's also some easy recipes for you to try at home and several plant-based guides to assist with shopping and baking.

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