

Expert sheds light on vitamin B12 deficiency and treatment



New Delhi, June 6 (UNI) Vitamin B12, also known as cobalamin, is a vital water-soluble nutrient essential for a range of important bodily functions, including the formation of red blood cells, DNA synthesis, nerve function, and energy metabolism, said Dr Sanjay Agrawal, Scientific Advisor of ALKOMEX GBN PHARMA GROUP, U.S.A.

Highlighting its importance, Dr Agrawal noted that vitamin B12 occurs in several forms—cyanocobalamin, methylcobalamin, adenosylcobalamin, and hydroxocobalamin—and is available in various supplement formats including oral tablets, sublingual tablets, nasal sprays, and injectables.

“Vitamin B12 is crucial for maintaining overall health, supporting the nervous system, and ensuring healthy cell growth. However, our bodies cannot produce it, and it is primarily obtained through animal-based foods like liver, meat, eggs, and dairy products,” he said.

Dr Agrawal added that the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for adolescents and adults is 2.4 micrograms daily, increasing slightly for pregnant (2.6 mcg) and breastfeeding women (2.8 mcg).

“An estimated 75 per cent of India’s population is deficient in vitamin B12,” he said, identifying vegetarians, elderly individuals, pregnant and lactating women, chronic alcohol users, and those with gut disorders as especially vulnerable.

Common signs of deficiency include generalised fatigue, pale skin, loss of appetite, numbness in limbs, mood changes, memory loss, and walking difficulties. To confirm deficiency, several blood tests such as serum B12 levels, methylmalonic acid (MMA), homocysteine, and holotranscobalamin (HoloTC) are used.

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He added that vitamin B12 supplements are considered safe, even at doses 1,000 times higher than the recommended intake. However, in rare cases, injections might cause mild side effects such as dizziness, itching, or nausea.

“There is no known toxicity associated with high intakes of vitamin B12 from food or supplements. Since it is a water-soluble vitamin, any excess is usually excreted in urine. Still, individuals with kidney issues should avoid high-dose cyanocobalamin and opt for methylcobalamin,” he cautioned.

Before starting any vitamin supplement, Dr Agrawal advised the public to consult a medical professional, disclose ongoing health conditions and medications, and follow prescribed dosage and duration. “Unsupervised use can lead to unwanted effects, even for essential vitamins like B12,” he added.

More information is available on his official website: www.drsanjayagrawal.in.