



INDIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION (HQS.)

(Registered under the Societies Act XXI of 1860)

Mutually Affiliated with the British & Nepal Medical Associations

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Press Release

Majority of Indians deficient in Vitamin B12, says IMA

This vitamin is essential for proper body functioning and must be adequately supplemented through other means, particularly in vegetarians

New Delhi, 31 July 2017: Among the various vitamins that are an important constituent of our diet and essential to keep the body functioning properly, vitamin B12 occupies an important place. As per the IMA, it is alarming to note that a sizeable portion of the Indian population is deficient in B12.

Vitamin B12, or Cobalamin, is one of the eight B vitamins required for proper functioning and health of the nerve tissue, brain function, and red blood cells. It helps in the production of DNA and RNA, and neurotransmitters.

A prolonged deficiency of this vitamin can manifest as anemia, fatigue, memory loss, mood swings, irritability, tingling or numbness in the arms and legs, poor vision, mouth ulcers, constipation/diarrhea, neurological illnesses and infertility. However, B12 deficiency is reversible.

Speaking about this, **Padma Shri Awardee Dr K K Aggarwal, National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr RN Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA in a joint statement**, said, “Every minute, our body produces millions of red blood cells. However, these cells cannot multiply properly without vitamin B12 causing anemia. Vitamin B12 deficiency is common in infants who are exclusively breast-fed and those who do not have access to supplemental nutrients. Vegetarians and vegans are more susceptible to this deficiency. Stress, poor eating habits, genetic factors and diseases of the intestines such as Crohn’s disease impair absorption of B12. Those who are over 50 years of age have reduced ability to absorb it from foods. Being a water-soluble vitamin, insufficient intake of water can also affect its absorption.”

Adding further, **Dr Aggarwal**, said, “Deficiency of B12 is detected through blood tests such as complete blood count (CBC) and the level of vitamin B12 in the blood. The levels of folate (another B vitamin) are also usually measured for a related condition called folate deficiency anemia. Once the diagnosis is established, a person is usually referred to a specialist. For instance, hematologist for blood conditions, a gastroenterologist for digestive disorders, and a dietitian for advice on food containing more vitamin B12.”

Here are few tips to prevent deficiency of Vitamin B12.

Avoid consumption of alcohol *Consuming alcohol in excess leads to gastritis and damages the intestinal lining. This can further interfere with absorption of vitamin B12.*

Quit smoking. *It has been observed that serum vitamin B12 levels are usually lower in smoking.*

Have supplements Vegetarian food is deficient in vitamin B12. Therefore, it is important for them to take a B12-containing multivitamin. Other than this include soy foods and foods fortified with vitamin B12 in your diet.

Include vitamin B6 in your diet This will help in the absorption and storage of vitamin B12. Spinach, walnuts, poultry, avocados, and bananas are good sources of B6.

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About IMA: Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 30 States and Union Territories. It has over 2, 60,000 doctors as its members through more than 1765 active local branches spread across the country.

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