

## Micronutrient of the month: Vitamin B12



By nutritional therapist  
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College of Naturopathic Medicine

Vitamin B12 is produced by micro-organisms such as bacteria, and has the mineral cobalt at its core. It occurs in highest amounts in animal foods and is difficult to get in sufficient quantities from purely vegetarian sources.

B12 is vital to our energy levels and the health of our nervous systems. B12 deficiency can cause severe and permanent brain and nerve damage so if you're experiencing memory problems, fatigue, nervousness, numbness in the extremities, palpitations or depression, then it could be a sign of B12 insufficiency.

Unlike other members of the B vitamin family, we store several years' supply in the liver so it may take some time before we notice the effects of persistently low dietary intake.

The processes involved in breaking down and using proteins, carbohydrates and fats are all B12 dependent. Nerve cells need B12 to ensure their covering, the myelin sheath, is formed correctly so nervousness or numbness in the extremities can be signs of insufficiency. Red blood cells need B12 to properly aid their construction; B12 deficiency can cause them to function poorly. B12 is also a vital part of the recycling system for homocysteine, a known marker of increased cardiovascular risk. This compound occurs naturally in the body but can directly damage blood vessels if levels get too high.

So how do you know if you may not be getting enough B12? Check to see how frequently the following foods appear in your diet: Calf's liver, (this is the best food source of B12, but as liver is an organ of detoxification, ensure that it's organic), sardines, shrimp, salmon, beef, dairy products and eggs. B12 is quite stable, and up to 70 per cent of it is still available from foods after grilling or roasting.

Absorption of B12 is an involved process which relies heavily on healthy stomach acid levels. If you regularly take some types of medication this will certainly have been compromised and you could require B12 supplementation.

If you think you may need to supplement with B12, consult a naturopath who can help assess your needs and advise on the most suitable supplement.



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## Pizza: one of your five a day?

Pizza and ready meals could carry the official five-a-day health logo under proposals being considered by the government in a bid to tackle obesity levels.

So-called composite foods, including tinned soups, could feature the branding in an attempt to help more people reach their target of eating five portions of fruit or vegetables a day.

Public Health England found that 40 per cent of pre-prepared food contained at least one portion of fruit and vegetables. However such a move could mean that foods containing unhealthy levels of salt, fat and sugar could carry the health logo, which is a confusing message for consumers.

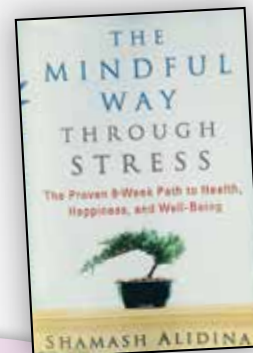
The proposals have been met with dismay by health groups. Kawther Hashem, from the Action on Sugar campaign group, said: "Retailers should be making it easier for consumers to eat whole fruit and vegetables through in-store promotions not by adding more logos to packaging."



**Make your own rules diet** by Tara Stiles (Hay House, £18.99)  
This beautiful book is part healthy eating guide, part lifestyle manual and part yoga regime. It's also packed with inspiring photographs and delicious recipes.

**The mindful way through stress** by Shamash Alidina (Guildford Press)

This guide to the mindfulness-based stress reduction approach can help you significantly reduce your stress levels in just 10 minutes a day. There's also a companion website with lots of downloadable mindfulness exercises.

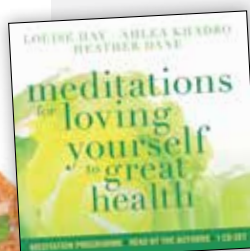


## BOOK SHELF

*We take a look at some of the newest natural health books, DVDs and CDs*

**Greens 24/7** by Jessica Nadel (Apple Press, £14.99)

From spinach brownies to cinnamon courgette waffles, this book contains more than 100 vegan recipes featuring green vegetables in ways you never imagined possible.



**Meditations for Loving Yourself to Great Health** by Louise Hay, Ahlea Khadro and Heather Dane (Hay House, £8.99)

This CD features guided audio meditations to support you in changing your way of life to one that focuses on nourishing your body and treating it with love. It includes an introduction to meditation and four meditations.