

## Get on the brain wagon with B12

As a young doctor 40 years ago, I noticed my seasoned colleagues frequently giving B12 injections to older patients. These docs said their patients felt and were better after such an injection. As a new doctor, fresh out of medical school, I knew that this was just a placebo effect, since the teaching that I had is that if folks ate properly, no one would need extra vitamins except the less than 1 percent of the population who had a genetic deficit such as pernicious anemia. How dumb I was!!



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ALL THINGS  
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Now, the National Academy of Sciences is urging older peo-

ple to take additional B12 and not rely on food sources alone. Since folic acid has been added to wheat flour in 1998 to prevent neural tube defects in fetuses, there has been much more documented B12 deficiency and dementia in the elderly. Prior to folic acid wheat fortification, B12 deficiency caused pernicious anemia.

Now that there is excess folic acid, the anemia is masked, but we do see one of the main consequences of B12 deficiency, *dementia*!! Many older folks, because of lack of stomach acid and/or taking stomach medicine, cannot absorb even the minimal amount of B12 in their food, which has an RDA of only 2.4 mg.

The normal B12 blood value of greater than 1.50 pmol/l is unreliable. I have been suspicious of this for the last decade, since I first read an article in the "Journal of American Geriatric Society" (1992), routinely recommending larger

doses of 1000 to 5000 ug of B12 in the elderly, since their deficiency was commonly undiagnosed.

What about reducing the folic acid supplemented wheat flour? I believe folic acid should be continued to fortify our wheat products to prevent birth defects. Also importantly, it decreases serum homocysteine (a leading risk factor for cardiovascular disease) and by another mechanism, the incidence of cancer. The government should fortify foods with B12 as well.

Until that time happens, I will continue to have a low threshold and give B12 injections. It can also be taken sublingually (under the tongue), or even orally at doses of 1000 to 5000 daily. 1000 mcg (micrograms) equals 1 mg (milligram). It is extremely safe, very inexpensive and whether coincidentally or causally, improves vitality as well as helping the mind work better. Let's get on the brain wagon before it's too late.