

## Vitamin B-12 Deficiency – Calculating Your Risk Score

(from COULD IT BE B12?—An Epidemic of Misdiagnoses, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Sally M. Pacholok, RN, BSN, Jeffrey J. Stuart, DO)

### Neurological Symptoms

*If you have any of the symptoms below, give yourself 2 points. If you have more than one of the symptoms below, give yourself another point for each additional symptom.*

- Do you experience a “pins and needles” feeling or suffer from numbness or burning in your feet, hands, legs, and/or arms?
- Have you been diagnosed with diabetic or peripheral neuropathy?
- Do you suffer from weakness in your arms and/or legs?
- Do you experience light-headedness or dizziness?
- Are you prone to falling or do you fall frequently?
- Have you or others noticed any unusual changes in your ability to move? For instance, do you walk clumsily or with your feet wide apart, or have difficulty writing legibly?
- Have you notice problems with your memory or thinking: for instance, increased difficulty in remembering names or dates, or more trouble in adding numbers, balancing your checkbook, or making change? Do you sometimes become confused or disoriented? Do you suffer from memory problems or other symptoms of dementia?
- Do you have trouble knowing where various parts of your body are, if you aren’t looking? (For instance, do you have trouble walking in the dark, when you can’t see your feet?)
- Does your sense of touch, or your perception of pain, appear distorted?
- Has a doctor every told you that you have muscular spasticity (lack of coordination and excessive muscle contraction)?:
- Do you have a tremor?
- Do you suffer from urinary or fecal incontinence?
- Do you suffer from impotence?
- Do you have visual impairment, visual loss, or abnormal visual evoked potential tests?

### Psychiatric Symptoms

*If you have any of the symptoms below, give yourself 2 points. If you have more than one of the symptoms below, give yourself another point for each additional symptom.*

- Have you undergone any unusual personality changes? For instance do your friends say that you’re “not acting like yourself,” or do you find that you are more irritable than usual?
- Are you unusually apathetic or depressed, or have you ever been diagnosed with depression (including postpartum depression)? Have you ever had suicidal thoughts?
- Do you ever experience hallucinations or delusions?
- Do you every exhibit violent behavior?
- Have you been diagnosed with any other form of psychosis or mental illness, including schizophrenia or bipolar disorder?
- Do you find yourself becoming more paranoid about other people’s actions or intentions?

### Hematologic signs (abnormalities of blood cells)

*If you have any of the symptoms below, give yourself 2 points. If you have more than one of the symptoms below, give yourself another point for each additional symptom.*

- Has a doctor every told you that your red blood cells are abnormally large (macrocytosis)?
- Has a doctor every told you that you have abnormally small red blood cells, an iron deficiency, or iron deficiency anemia?
- Has a doctor every told you that you are anemic (low blood count or low hemoglobin)? Do you have low platelets, or a low white blood cell count?

## Gastrointestinal Risk Factors

*If you have any of the symptoms below, give yourself 2 points. If you have more than one of the symptoms below, give yourself another point for each additional symptom.*

- Have you been diagnosed with inflammation and/or wasting of the stomach lining (gastric atrophy)?
- Have you been diagnosed as having low stomach acid?
- Do you suffer from gastritis (inflammation of stomach lining)?
- Do you suffer from ulcers?
- Have you been diagnosed with gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD)?
- Do you have diverticulosis?
- Have you been diagnosed with precancerous gastrointestinal growths or gastrointestinal cancer?
- Have you undergone a gastrointestinal resection (partial or complete gastrectomy), undergone a gastric bypass surgery for weight loss, or had either partial or complete removal of your ileum (last part of the small intestine)?
- Have you been diagnosed with a malabsorption syndrome (Crohn's disease, inflammatory bowel disease, irritable bowel syndrome, or celiac disease [gluten enteropathy])?
- Do you have a family history of pernicious anemia (an autoimmune disease)?
- Have you been diagnosed with small bowel overgrowth (SIBO)?
- Have you been diagnosed with a tapeworm or other gastrointestinal parasite?

## General Risk Factors

*If you have any of the risk factors listed below, give yourself one point.*

- Are you age 60 or over?
- Do you have a thyroid disorder, or do you have an autoimmune disorder: for instance, lupus, insulin-dependent diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, Hashimoto's thyroiditis, Graves' disease, Addison's disease, vitiligo (patchy loss of skin color), hypogammaglobulinemia, or agammaglobulinemia?
- Have you ever had cancer? Have you undergone chemotherapy, or undergone radiation therapy?
- Have you ever undergone surgery (including dental surgery) in which nitrous oxide was used?
- Do you abuse nitrous oxide as a recreational drug?
- Are you a vegan or vegetarian, or do you follow a macrobiotic or a raw food diet?
- Are you an alcoholic?
- Are you taking any of the following medications: proton pump inhibitors (omeprazole [Prilosec], Nexium, Prevacid, Protonix), H2-blockers (ranitidine [Zantac], Pepcid, Tagamet, Axid), metformin (Glucophage), anticonvulsants (phenytoin [Dilantin], Phenobarbital, Mysoline), potassium supplements, birth control pills, colchicines, neomycin, methotrexate, cholestyramine (Questran) colestipol (Colestid), or aminosalicic acid?

## Other Signs/Symptoms Often Associated with B12 Deficiency

*If you have any of the risk factors listed below, give yourself one point.*

- Do you suffer from fatigue, lack of energy, or weakness?
- Do you suffer from generalized weakness?
- Have you experience a loss of weight or loss of appetite?
- Do you suffer from chest pain, or from shortness of breath with exertion (e.g., walking from your bed to the toilet or to your kitchen)?
- Are you unusually pale, does your skin have a grayish cast, or do you have a lemon-yellow skin color?
- Do you have a sore, inflamed, or "beefy red" tongue?
- Do you suffer from tinnitus (ringing in the ears)?
- If you are female, has a doctor ever told you that your Pap smear showed abnormal cells (cervical dysplasia)?
- Do you suffer from infertility?

**To Calculate Your Risk Score Add Points in Every Category**

**Low Risk = < 3 points; Moderate Risk = 3 – 6 points; High Risk = 7+ points**

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