

# The Benefits of Eating a Plant-Based Diet: The Vitamin B12 Deficiency Myth

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Part of a series of articles written on various topics regarding 'The Benefits of Eating a Plant-Based Diet.'

I have been vegan for many years now, and have been forced, like many other vegetarians and vegans, to deal with the many falsehoods and myths surrounding plant-based diets. The first question I usually get is "But where do you get your protein?" The idea of a vegetarian not getting enough protein or having to combine proteins has been outdated for many years! Plant foods are incredibly high in amino acids, the building blocks of all proteins. Some plant foods, such as hemp seeds, are even complete proteins and contain the all essential amino acids needed by humans. The proteins found in meat and dairy products are often indigestible after being cooked and can sit inside of the intestines and putrefy. A diet too high in animal proteins can also prevent the absorption and assimilation of necessary vitamins and minerals, including Calcium (1). It seems paradoxical then, that we are led to believe that cow's milk is a good source of calcium. This also explains why the countries with the highest levels of dairy consumption - the United States, Denmark, Norway, Holland and Sweden - also have the highest rates of osteoporosis, bone disease, heart disease, and breast cancer while in the countries with the lowest dairy consumption, rates of these diseases are much lower (1).

The next question I get from people is "What about vitamin B12?" I have to admit, when I first decided to be vegan, this one got to me a little. So I did some research into vitamin B12 deficiencies, and I was very surprised with what I found. On the surface, everything you find is about vegans and how if you don't eat any animal products, you won't get any B12. But if you look a little deeper (or happen to take a college level anatomy class) you learn a little more about B12, what it is, and where it actually comes from. "Many people say that the only foods which contain vitamin B12 are animal-derived foods. This also is undefined. No foods naturally contain vitamin B12 - neither animal or plant foods. Vitamin B12 is a microbe - a bacteria - it is produced by microorganisms," (2). So there you have it, you don't have to eat animal products to get vitamin B12, only have good intestinal health, which unfortunately, most Americans are severely lacking. The bacteria that live inside of your intestines produce B12, which is then absorbed through your digestive tract. However, this cannot happen if your gastro-intestinal tract is not a conducive environment to the growth and spread of friendly flora (probiotics)...or if it is clogged with a thick, sludgy layer of undigested proteins from meat, dairy, and gluten-containing wheat products.

I still wondered how someone like myself, who was eating a very healthy diet of whole, unprocessed raw fruits and vegetables, could in some way be deficient in any vitamin when compared to a SAD (Standard American Diet) meat-eater guzzling french-fries, burgers, and soda. Then I came across this: "The author does not believe that a vitamin B12 deficiency is more widespread in vegans or vegetarians - this is probably just another marketing lie...In fact, contrary to meat and dairy industry propaganda, meat-eaters are known to be more likely to have a vitamin B12 deficiency - this has been known since 1959!" (3). Studies have shown that those on a SAD meat-eating diet actually require more B12 than those eating a plant-based diet (3). As vitamin B12 actually comes from a microbe living on the foods we eat that would be killed when a product is cooked/irradiated, then a person eating cooked meat and ultra pasteurized dairy products will actually be consuming very little to no B12, while a raw food vegan, consuming fresh, organic raw produce will inevitably be consuming higher amounts of B12. "Animal and dairy produce is a poor source of Vitamin B12 since they are normally cooked and therefore the vitamin is contained in nutrient-deranged foodstuffs which will inevitably destroy the usability of the vitamin," (2). A raw food vegan, vegan, or even a vegetarian will also have a much cleaner digestive tract than a SAD meat-eater, resulting in higher levels of probiotics residing in the intestines and increased B12 absorption and reabsorption.

It is also helpful to understand that "vitamin B12 can be destroyed by...highly acid conditions," (4). This means that the B12 in meat would be destroyed by the increased levels of hydrochloric acid needed in the stomach to digest meat products (4). That is, if the B12 microbes were not already killed by the several rounds of antibiotics given to animals in factory farms. Vegan and raw food vegans, especially, generally have a much more balanced alkaline internal environment than do SAD meat-eaters and vegetarians who consume dairy (both meat and dairy are highly acid forming).

So how can you ensure that your body is getting the Vitamin B12 it needs? Eat a plant-based diet rich in raw foods (at least 50%). "It has also been reported that vitamin B12 is present in wild fruits and wild and home-grown plant

foods," (2). Raw food guru and author, David Wolfe, believes that the natural soil microbes and bacteria found on wild plant foods and unwashed garden plants are typically adequate to supply our B12 requirements (5). Also, avoid meat, dairy, and gluten containing products which create an acidic internal environment and effectively line the intestinal walls with a thick layer of mucus, preventing absorption of B12. Buy raw and organic to avoid foods that have been pasteurized, ultra-pasteurized, or irradiated. Include nutrient dense algae, such as Spirulina and Marine Phytoplankton, into your daily diet. Both are part plant, part microbe and contain vitamin B12. Marine phytoplankton also happens to be the original source of omega 3-6-9, is sustainably harvested, and runs no risk of mercury contamination, unlike fish oil. I hope that this has cleared up some of the confusion regarding a popular vegetarian myth, that of B12 deficiency.

1. "Milk, the Deadly Poison", Robert Cohen
2. 'The Vitamin B12 Issue', Dr. Gena Shaw
3. 'Fit for Life', Diamond, H. and M., 1987
4. 'Human Anatomy and Physiology', Marieb
5. Sunfood Diet Success System, Wolfe, David

For more information or to purchase Marine Phytoplankton, visit: [Elements For Life](#)

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