

Common Nutrient Deficiencies: Iodine, Vitamin B12, Magnesium

Many health fanatics are determined to live a healthy lifestyle. They monitor their eating habits and exercise routines carefully. While this is great, it isn't always enough.

Even the healthiest eating plans – like the Paleo diet and veganism – might not be as great as you think. Many people suffer from nutrient deficiencies, and they don't even know it.

Check out the three most common nutrient deficiencies. Are you at risk?

Iodine Deficiency

Iodine is a trace mineral. Its primary role is to maintain the health of our thyroid. Previously, iodine deficiency was believed to be a health issue that was confined to third-world countries. However, the deficiency is becoming more prevalent in developing countries too.

There are several symptoms of an iodine deficiency:

- Goiter – Iodine is tasked with thyroid development. If iodine levels drop, the thyroid's health will be affected. Many times, the gland will expand, causing a visible lump.
- Hypothyroidism – Iodine is necessary for proper thyroid hormone production. Without iodine, hormone levels will dip. This usually causes weight gain, loss of hair, various skin conditions, erectile dysfunction,

infertility, and much more.

- Cretinism – If pregnant moms don't get enough iodine, the baby could be born with a neurological birth defect.

There are two main causes of an iodine deficiency. First, most people don't eat enough iodine-rich foods. If you'd like to increase your iodine levels naturally, try cooking up some fish. Grilling retains more of the iodine than boiling. Also, egg yolk is a great source of iodine.

Secondly, many health nuts cut salt out of their diet. While this may, in theory, be a good idea, you are robbing yourself of a primary source of iodine – iodized salt.

Vitamin B12 Deficiency

This is one of the most common – yet severely under diagnosed – nutrient deficiencies. Why is it prevalent and undetected at the same time?

Most people don't go looking for a vitamin B12 deficiency. And fewer doctors routinely test for it. If you eat even a marginally healthy diet, it is assumed you are getting enough vitamin B12.

When symptoms like fatigue, weight gain, anxiety and depression start emerging, vitamin B12 levels *might* get checked. Usually, testing isn't the go-to response until something major like dementia and autism spectrum disorder (in children) start showing up.

A vitamin B12 deficiency is one of the few deficiencies that cannot easily be “fixed” with the diet. Usually supplementation is needed.

If the nutrient is taken via oral pills, the body will have to first absorb it into the bloodstream before it can be used. The vast majority of the nutrient is actually lost during this process. On the other hand, vitamin B12 shots ensure the full

dose is utilized.

Which populations are most susceptible to a vitamin B12 deficiency?

The first population is anyone who has another health issue that is impairing the body's ability to absorb the vitamin B12. For example, Crohn's disease or celiac disease make it nearly impossible for the body to utilize the consumed nutrient.

Another population segment that is commonly afflicted with a B12 deficiency is vegetarians and vegans. Since they don't eat animal products (the only source of vitamin B12), they often need alternative sources.

Lastly, senior citizens are very susceptible to vitamin B12 deficiencies. As we age, our bodies struggle to produce intrinsic factor—a necessary ingredient in the B12 absorption process.

If you don't mind eating animal products and your digestive system is functioning properly, try eating foods rich in vitamin B12 – like liver, salmon, or sardines.

Magnesium Deficiency

Studies show a mere 25% of all Americans reach the recommended daily intake of magnesium. This lack of magnesium consumption can lead to major health concerns like:

- Diabetes
- Osteoporosis
- Heart issues
- Asthma and other respiratory issues
- Colon cancer

While the deficiency is still in the beginning stages, individuals can expect to experience:

- Severe headaches
- Restless leg syndrome
- Cramps
- Fibromyalgia
- Constipation

There are three main reasons why the general population suffers from a magnesium deficiency. First, our water is too clean! When purifying drinking water, magnesium is usually removed.

Second, there isn't enough magnesium in the soil. Since magnesium is generally found in plant foods (not animal foods), the soil needs to be rich with magnesium in order to pass it along in the foods we eat.

Third, few of us eat enough magnesium dense foods. For example, when was the last time you sat down to a large serving of Swiss chard or spinach?! Fortunately, there are other sources, too – like nuts, seeds, espresso (yum!), dark chocolate (double yum!) and halibut.

Living a healthy lifestyle is admirable. But if you want to truly take care of your body, you'll assess your eating habits and foods at the nutrient level.

Sources:

- *Ancient Minerals* – Magnesium Deficiency
- *Do You Have a Vitamin B12 Deficiency?* -Amino Pharmaceuticals
- *Iodine in Diet* – Medline Plus
- *How putting magnesium in tap water could help prevent hundreds of hip fractures each year* – Daily Mail
- *Cretinism* – Wikipedia
- *Micronutrient deficiencies* – World Health Organization