

Vitamin B12 Injection, Hydroxocobalamin-Brand names: Cobalin-H, Neo-Cytamen

Find out how hydroxocobalamin treats and prevents vitamin B12 deficiency anaemia, and how you'll have it.

About hydroxocobalamin-Brand names: Cobalin-H, Neo-Cytamen

Hydroxocobalamin is a manufactured version of the vitamin B12. It's used to treat and prevent vitamin B12 deficiency anaemia, where you have low levels of this vitamin in your body.

Your body requires vitamin B12 to make red blood cells. You can get it from your food or supplements, but sometimes there may not be enough vitamins in what you eat. This can happen if you are vegan or you do not eat much meat or dairy products.

The most common cause of vitamin B12 deficiency in the UK is pernicious anaemia (an autoimmune condition that affects your stomach).

Vitamin B12 deficiency can also be a side effect of [metformin](#), a diabetes medicine, particularly if you take a high dose of metformin or if you take it for a long time.

Hydroxocobalamin is only available on prescription.

It is given as an injection. This will usually be at your GP surgery but you might sometimes have it in hospital.

Key facts

- Hydroxocobalamin starts to work straight away. However, it may take a few days or weeks before your symptoms start to improve and you feel better.
- At first, you may need to have the injection a few times a week to boost your levels of vitamin B12. Once your condition improves, you might only have it every few months.
- Some common side effects are feeling or being sick and diarrhoea.
- You may have some pain, swelling or itching where you had the injection. This is usually mild and does not last long.
- It's safe to take for a long time. Some people need to take hydroxocobalamin for the rest of their lives.

Who can and cannot have hydroxocobalamin-Brand names: Cobalin-H, Neo-Cytamen

Who can have hydroxocobalamin

Most adults and children can have hydroxocobalamin injections.

Who may not be able to have hydroxocobalamin

Hydroxocobalamin is not suitable for some people. To make sure it's safe for you, tell your doctor before having hydroxocobalamin if you:

- have ever had an allergic reaction to hydroxocobalamin or any other medicine
- have an allergy to cobalt
- have been told you have low levels of potassium
- have an irregular or fast heartbeat ([arrhythmia](#))

Having your hydroxocobalamin injection-Brand names: Cobalin-H, Neo-Cytamen

Dosage

When you first start having your hydroxocobalamin treatment, you'll usually have an injection a few times a week.

Your dose may go up or down, depending on your response to the treatment and the vitamin B12 levels in your blood.

To see how well it's working, your doctor will ask you about your symptoms such as tiredness and lack of energy. They will also give you regular blood tests to monitor the vitamin B12 levels in your blood.

As your symptoms and vitamin B12 levels improve, you may be able to have the injections less often, such as every few months.

How you will have it

A nurse, or possibly a doctor, will usually give you your hydroxocobalamin injection. The injection is given into a muscle (known as an intramuscular injection).

You may have some pain, swelling or itching where you had the injection. This is usually mild and will wear off quite quickly.

How long you'll have it for

Your doctor will decide exactly how long you will need to have hydroxocobalamin injections. It depends on how well you respond to your treatment.

It will usually be a few months or sometimes years.

For pernicious anaemia, you'll need to take hydroxocobalamin for the rest of your life.

If you miss an injection

It's important to go to your appointments.

If you miss having your injection, the level of vitamin B12 in your body will go down further. This may make your health problems worse.

If you do have to miss an appointment, ask your doctor or nurse when you should have the next dose.

Side effects of hydroxocobalamin-Brand names: Cobalin-H, Neo-Cytamen

Like all medicines, hydroxocobalamin can cause side effects in some people, but not everyone gets them.

Common side effects

There are things you can do to help cope with these common side effects of hydroxocobalamin:

Pain, swelling or itchy skin where you had the injection

Feeling or being sick (nausea or vomiting)

Diarrhoea

Headaches

Feeling dizzy

Hot flushes

Speak to a doctor or pharmacist if the advice on how to cope does not help and a side effect is still bothering you or does not go away.

Serious side effects

Serious side effects are very rare.

Tell your doctor or call 111 immediately if you get irregular heartbeats or heartbeats that suddenly become more noticeable ([palpitations](#)) after having treatment.

As hydroxocobalamin contains cobalt, it can cause sensitivity reactions in people who have an allergy to cobalt. Symptoms can start straight away or up to 3 days after having a dose. Talk to your doctor or call 111 if you get an allergic skin reaction such as a rash or hives.

Serious allergic reaction

In rare cases, hydroxocobalamin can cause a serious allergic reaction ([anaphylaxis](#)).

Other side effects

These are not all the side effects of hydroxocobalamin. For a full list, see the leaflet inside your medicine's packet.

Pregnancy, breastfeeding and fertility while having hydroxocobalamin-Brand names:

Cobalin-H, Neo-Cytamen

Hydroxocobalamin and pregnancy

Hydroxocobalamin can be used during pregnancy.

It's important that a vitamin B12 deficiency is correctly treated to make sure that you and your baby are healthy.

Hydroxocobalamin and breastfeeding

You can have hydroxocobalamin while you're breastfeeding.

Hydroxocobalamin is a natural part of breast milk. When you have hydroxocobalamin injections as a supplement or treatment, it passes into your breast milk in low amounts and helps your baby to stay healthy.

If your baby also has vitamin B12 deficiency, they will still also need treating themselves.

If you notice your baby is not feeding as well, or you have any concerns about your baby, contact your doctor, pharmacist, health visitor or midwife.

Hydroxocobalamin and fertility

There's no evidence to suggest that taking hydroxocobalamin affects fertility in either men or women. **Having hydroxocobalamin with other medicines and herbal supplements-**

Brand names: Cobalin-H, Neo-Cytamen

Cautions with other medicines

Hydroxocobalamin is usually safe to have with other medicines, including painkillers.

Mixing hydroxocobalamin with herbal remedies and supplements

There's not enough information to say that complementary medicines, [herbal remedies](#) and supplements are safe to take with hydroxocobalamin. They're not tested in the same way as pharmacy and prescription medicines. They're generally not tested for the effect they have on other medicines.

Common questions about hydroxocobalamin-Brand names: Cobalin-H, Neo-Cytamen

How does hydroxocobalamin work?

Hydroxocobalamin is a manufactured version of vitamin B12.

It works by increasing your levels of vitamin B12 so that you can make red blood cells that work properly to carry oxygen around your body.

This helps to reduce symptoms such as tiredness and lack of energy.

When will I feel better?

Hydroxocobalamin starts to work straight away. However, it may take a few days or weeks before your vitamin B12 levels and symptoms (such as extreme tiredness or lack of energy) start to improve.

Are there any long-term side effects?

It's OK to have hydroxocobalamin injections for a long time. Some people will need to have them for the rest of their lives.

What will happen if I stop having the injections?

You'll be given appointments for your hydroxocobalamin injections.

If you miss having your injection, the level of vitamin B12 in your body will go down even more. This may make your health problems worse.

Talk to your doctor if you want to stop having hydroxocobalamin injections or if you are bothered by side effects.

Will it affect my contraception?

Hydroxocobalamin will not stop any type of contraception working, including the [combined pill](#), [progestogen-only pill](#) and [emergency contraception](#).

Contraceptive pills may reduce the levels of hydroxocobalamin in your blood, but this will not affect your treatment.

However, if hydroxocobalamin makes you sick (vomit) or have severe diarrhoea for more than 24 hours, your contraceptive pills may not protect you from pregnancy.

Find out more:

- [What to do if you're sick or have diarrhoea when taking the combined pill](#)
- [What to do if you're sick or have diarrhoea when taking the progestogen-only pill](#)

Can I drive or ride a bike?

Hydroxocobalamin generally does not affect your ability to drive or ride a bike.

However, it can make some people feel dizzy. If you feel dizzy after having it, do not drive, cycle or use any machinery or tools until you feel OK again.

It's an offence to drive a car if your ability to drive safely is affected. It's your responsibility to decide if it's safe to drive. If you're in any doubt, do not drive.

Talk to your doctor if you're unsure whether it's safe for you to drive while having hydroxocobalamin. [GOV.UK has more information on the law on drugs and driving.](#)

Can I drink alcohol while having hydroxocobalamin?

Yes, you can drink alcohol while having hydroxocobalamin. Alcohol does not affect how this medicine works.

However, drinking too much on a regular basis can cause [folate deficiency anaemia](#).

Try not to drink more than 14 [units of alcohol](#) a week. A standard glass of wine (175ml) is 2 units. A pint of lager or beer is usually 2 to 3 units of alcohol.

Is there any food or drink I need to avoid?

You can eat and drink normally while having hydroxocobalamin.

Source: <https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/hydroxocobalamin/>