



B12 Injection - what are the alternatives during Coronavirus?

For patients with borderline deficiency (levels >150ng/l and an absence of neurological symptoms) - consider OTC 50-150mcg daily in line with local guidance (attached).

For patients on long term therapy for an established deficiency (e.g.levels <150ng/l, pernicious anaemia, or neurological symptoms/macrocytosis).

- The majority of patients will need to stay on IM therapy with the duration extended for patients who are self-isolating or where symptoms allow

Alternatives include:

- 1000 micrograms daily of oral vitamin B12 has been shown to be effective in patients with pernicious anaemia. There is sufficient passive absorption from this dose to meet the daily requirements of most patients. Whilst this is used widely in other countries it is rarely used in the UK, and as a result the only 1000microgram tablets are “specials” with limited availability and high cost. Secondly not all patients will have their needs met by this dose, and in the absence of monitoring, patients would need to report any symptoms suggesting they are deficient. **Suggest prescribe 1000micrograms orally only for shielded patients, to prevent stock shortages across the UK**
- Tablets are available to buy from Amazon, pharmacies and health food shops. Pernicious anaemia is not a condition that would normally be managed by self-care, however if patients would like to do this, the dose is 1000micrograms daily. Please bear in mind in reducing the footfall into surgeries we do not want to increase it in retail outlets. **Suggest OTC for those patients who are able to purchase (Amazon have 180 x 1mg for £13) are capable of understanding the dose instructions, and the need to report any return of symptoms.**
- Home administration of the injection maybe an option for some patients who have first-aid trained relatives living in the same household.
- **Do not use oral B12 for newly diagnosed patients. Initial loading must be IM**

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4993789/>

<https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD004655.pub3/full>

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