

241 fast, easy ways to wow your holiday crowd

November 24, 2008

healthy living made easy

First



DOUBLE YOUR ENERGY TODAY

GI problems have triggered a B-vitamin deficiency in 84% of us. The fix is simple!

DROP 47 LBS BY CHRISTMAS

Discover the nutrient that burns up to 2 lbs of fat every day

YOU, BODY BEAUTIFUL

Stylists share their top tips to looking party-perfect

FOUND \$\$\$

What to do right now to save big on your 2008 taxes

FROM HECTIC TO HAPPY

LORI LOUGHLIN shares how she finally learned to STOP STRESSING

SWEET COMFORT

BRAD PAISLEY on why your man loves you more than you know

HEALTHY IN A HURRY

6 secrets that will have you feeling great all day

LUXE FOR LESS

Loving touches that won't break the bank

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The oh-so-easy

"I had become trapped in a world of relentless fatigue, secrets and fear."

—Robin Gould, 39, Nashville

Could a B₁₂ deficiency be sapping your energy?

ONE-MINUTE QUIZ

If you experience two or more of the following, you may have a B₁₂ shortfall. For confirmation, ask your doctor to perform a B₁₂ serum test and a *urinary methylmalonic acid* test.

- Feeling easily frazzled
- Difficulty multitasking/memory lapses
- Blue mood/irritability/anxiety
- Three or more colds or flu infections a year
- Paleness or dark under-eye circles
- Muscle weakness or joint pain
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Poor balance
- Numbness or tingling in the extremities

Exhausted and with tears stinging her eyes, Robin Gould lay in her bed listening as a cherished nighttime ritual—her boys' recitation of their bedtime prayers—took place in the next room without her. "I would count the minutes until I could rest," says Robin. "Yet I dreaded sleep because I was missing out on so much." Here, how Robin reclaimed her vitality.

At 33, I was case manager for an autism program, a wife, a mom of two boys (Dominic, 8, and Daniel, 5)—and completely exhausted. I thought I'd been working too hard and took some time off, but that didn't cut it. Mental brownouts were constant: I'd put the ice cream in the fridge and the cheese in the freezer, and on a few horrifying occasions, I left the stove on all night!

"I felt more like a burden than a wife and mom."

When I finally dragged myself to the doctor, a blood panel suggested that low levels of vitamin B₁₂ were causing my symptoms. And once I got a couple B₁₂ shots, I bounded right back to my old self. But after a move to another city several weeks later, I started feeling wiped out again, barely able to cut up boneless chicken for the boys' lunches.

My new doctor didn't buy into the idea that my vitamin deficiency was sticking around—the liver can store B₁₂ for years, he scoffed. And with second and third opinions backing him up, I didn't have the strength to argue.

Diagnoses included chronic fatigue syndrome and depression. But it wasn't long before my symptoms started veering off into the Twilight Zone. I experienced

tiredness cure

health

Alert! Women with "normal" B₁₂ levels can still feel the drain

pinkie tremors, a painful scalp and tongue, and a wobbly gait. Food tasted strange. And as my depression deepened, I became anxious, irritable and mistrustful—almost paranoid. And the chest pain...it hit me so hard while I was driving one day that I ran into a curb. (Thank God the kids weren't in the car!)

Things were coming undone in my marriage, too. My husband, Dave, started treating me like the family's third child: Did I turn off the oven? Put away the eggs? Was the water left running?

Where was the capable woman I had always been? I began to see myself as more of a burden than a wife and mom. I would crawl into bed at night and whimper to Dave, "I don't know what's happening to me." In truth, I thought I might be going crazy. I was convinced that if my doctors and family really understood the extent of my symptoms, they would put me away. I became trapped in a world of relentless fatigue, secrets and fear.

"I wasn't imagining things—I was sick!"

Remembering how good those B₁₂ shots had made me feel, I ventured online and typed in "B12." Pages of info flashed on the screen. I couldn't believe what I was reading—all my symptoms popped up

on list after list. I was thrilled to realize I wasn't crazy...I was sick! I shared the discoveries with Dave, knowing that my search for answers was finally over.

Further digging led me to the book *Could It Be B₁₂?* (Quill Driver, 2005), and I contacted the authors, Sally M. Pacholok, R.N., and Jeffrey J. Stuart, D.O. They got back to me immediately with the name of a B₁₂-aware physician in my area. To my utter amazement, not only did the doc not flinch as I recited my catalog of symptoms, he beat me to the punch by reeling off a few himself! The doctor went on to explain that it is a widespread medical myth that one or two B₁₂ shots will sustain you for years. Doctor after doctor had fed me outdated information, and I ate it up!

So I went back for another round of B₁₂ injections and felt my energy soar within days. My other symptoms began to disappear shortly thereafter. I was overcome by an almost child-like joy—perhaps because I had been without happiness for so long. To keep my symptoms away, I go in for a B₁₂ shot once a month.

Now I cook for Dave and the boys without fear of burning down the house. I'm laughing, I'm planning for the future—I'm even earning a Ph.D. in health psychology. I am *living* again.

Antacids are triggering a fatigue epidemic

Many people reach for antacids when heartburn strikes, but there's reason to pause: "Heartburn, bloat and gastric reflux can be signs that the stomach is producing too *little*—not too much—hydrochloric acid," maintains Ann Louise Gittleman, Ph.D., author of *The Gut Flush Plan* (Avery, 2008). "A low-acid state can lead to an energy-draining B₁₂ deficiency." And since antacids drive hydrochloric acid levels even lower, such products can make symptoms worse.

Fortunately, it's easy to raise acid levels and boost B₁₂. Just mix 1 Tbs. of apple cider vinegar in 8 oz. of water and drink three times daily before meals, advises Gittleman. Or take a hydrochloric acid supplement. Start with one capsule per meal; if no stomach discomfort results, you can increase the per-meal dose to three capsules. One to try: Uni Key Health HCL + 2 (\$23 for 180 caplets, at UniKeyHealth.com, or call 800-888-4353 and mention *First* for a 20 percent discount).

- ! According to official reports, 39 percent of women are B₁₂ deficient. "But 'normal' test results only mean you aren't in the lowest 2.5 percent of the population," says Jacob Teitelbaum, M.D., medical director of the Fibromyalgia and Fatigue Centers, Inc.
- ! Even B₁₂ levels that are two times higher than the deficiency cutoff can cause fatigue, foggy thinking and body-wide pain. But out-of-touch doctors often tell patients they're just stressed.
- ! Up to 84 percent of women over the age of 40 have low B₁₂ levels. That's because over time, the stomach produces less *hydrochloric acid*, a digestive fluid needed for B₁₂ absorption.

WHAT CAN HELP

The body processes B₁₂ from food sources very slowly, which can make a shortfall tough to shake. For fast relief, Dr. Teitelbaum advises tuning in to your most troublesome symptoms.

- ▶ **Feeling unusually tired and foggy?** You can ease these first-tier symptoms in under a week by taking a B-complex supplement containing 500 mcg of B₁₂. One to try: Enzymatic Therapy Daily Energy B Complex (\$5 for 30 capsules, at Vitacost.com).
- ▶ **Experiencing depression and odd pain?** Low B₁₂ levels may be thinning the nerves' protective *myelin sheath*. To reverse symptoms in as little as four weeks, take 1,000 mcg of *methylcobalamin* (a potent form of B₁₂) daily. One to try: Jarrow Methyl B-12 1,000 mcg (\$7 for 100 lozenges, at iHerb.com), which is placed under the tongue for quick absorption.

STILL NO RELIEF? You may need prescription B₁₂ injections. Cost: about \$9 for 10 injections (which is often covered by insurance).