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Do You Have a Dangerous Vitamin Deficiency?

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In a modern nation such as the United States, where food is abundant and most people have access to good healthcare, you might think vitamin deficiencies would be rare.

In fact, vitamin and mineral deficiencies are surprisingly common. And they can cause a myriad of health problems.

"Nutritional deficiencies occur for many reasons, including food fads, drug interactions, and alcoholism," best-selling author John La Puma, M.D., tells Newsmax Health.

"Worldwide, about 40 percent of people are iron deficient, 15 percent are iodine deficient, and 40 percent of children are growing up without enough vitamin A."

However, here at home, the three most common and potentially dangerous nutritional deficiencies are vitamins D, B12, and magnesium. Dr. La Puma suggests having your blood tested during your annual checkup to spot potential problems before they become health hazards.

Vitamin D

Dr. La Puma, author of a new book [Refuel](#), says vitamin D deficiency is pandemic in the U.S., with about 42 percent of American adults suffering from this condition. Men without enough vitamin D have low testosterone levels and women often develop osteoporosis.

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Harvard researchers say that low levels of this crucial vitamin increase risk of heart attack, stroke, and no fewer than 17 forms of cancer.

Dr. Leslie Matthews, an assistant professor at Atlanta's Morehouse School of Medicine and a leading vitamin D expert, says that part of the problem is that our society has changed from an agricultural and hunting culture to an indoor culture.

"We're not getting that essential 15 minutes of sunshine daily," he says.

Research shows that vitamin D deficiency leads to some 85,000 American cancer deaths annually, notes Dr. Jacob Teitelbaum, author of the best-selling book *Real Cause, Real Cure*.

Dr. La Puma recommends regularly eating fatty fish like sardines, salmon, and trout and using a good vitamin D3 supplement to fix the problem.

Vitamin B12

This essential vitamin is deficient in more than 40 percent of people over age 26. It's a silent epidemic, says Dr. La Puma, with vegans and folks over 60 at particularly high risk.

Vitamin B12 is essential for proper red blood cell formation, neurological function, and DNA synthesis. Recently, research has linked B12 deficiency to the use of heartburn drugs that inhibit stomach acid. People taking proton pump inhibitor medications used to treat acid reflux and other stomach and esophageal conditions for two or more years were a whopping 65 percent more likely to be diagnosed with vitamin B12 deficiency.

B12 deficiency has potentially serious symptoms, including anemia and nerve damage.

"The body needs stomach acid to absorb B12," explains Dr. La Puma. Diabetes, thyroid disease, and alcohol abuse are other common causes of deficiency of this essential nutrient. You will find B12 in animal products such as fish, meat, dairy, poultry, and eggs as well as fortified whole grain cereals.

"Grass-fed bison and clams are excellent sources," says Dr. La Puma. "Vegetarians can use nutritional yeast to boost their intake."

Supplements may also be used to boost B12 levels.

Magnesium

Our overworked soil is getting depleted of magnesium, which means that there's too little of this essential mineral in our plants and in our diet. In fact, American magnesium levels have dropped by half in the last century due to changes in agriculture and diet.

Most Americans do not get the recommended amounts of this nutrient, says Dr. La Puma. Magnesium deficiency has been associated with Type-2 diabetes, osteoporosis, asthma, and colon cancer.

Magnesium also plays an important role in muscle control and the elimination of harmful toxins. A recent study in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* showed that people who eat magnesium-rich foods had fewer strokes.

Signs of deficiency include loss of appetite, nausea, fatigue, and weakness. Eat more spinach, Swiss chard, nuts, and dark chocolate to increase your intake of magnesium. Magnesium supplements are also widely available.

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