



6 April 2023

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Ref: H2023022132

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) to Manatū Hauora (the Ministry of Health) on 17 March 2023 for information regarding vitamin B12. Each part of your request is responded to below.

- 1. Is there a specific source database or set of databases of medical literature that medical practitioners use, either under recommendation or requirement, in New Zealand for the treatment of, for example, the B12 Vitamin or Cobalamin Deficiency?*

There is no specific source database or set of databases of medical literature that medical practitioners use in Aotearoa New Zealand. Medical practitioners may draw on a range of databases including, but not limited to, HealthPathways, Health Navigator, and the New Zealand Formulary when treating any given condition.

- 2. What is the Diagnostic Method required to be used in New Zealand to determine B12 Vitamin Deficiency? By that I mean the blood level scale used to determine any range of readings, including any level of deficiency. And is the Ministry aware that any such blood level scale may differ between Europe, Asia, and NZ? If so, please comment on same*

In Aotearoa New Zealand, the reference interval used varies between laboratories depending on the assays used. Serum B12 levels should be interpreted within the clinical context:

- B12 levels need to be considered in the context of the individual patient when formulating a treatment plan
- there is not always a direct correlation between serum vitamin B12 levels and vitamin B12 deficiency
- low levels are not diagnostic of deficiency and levels within the reference range do not exclude deficiency.

Further tests are sometimes indicated to further investigate for B12 deficiency, depending on the clinical context. These include Methylmalonic Acid (MMA), homocysteine, and intrinsic factor tests.

I hope you find this information helpful. Under section 28(3) of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request. The Ombudsman may be contacted by email at: info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or by calling 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Manatū Hauora website at: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joe Bourne', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Dr Joe Bourne
Chief Medical Officer
Manatū Hauora | Ministry of Health