

Self-Administration of Vitamin B12

Is it right for me?

Introduction

You are receiving this leaflet because your doctor or nurse believes you may be suitable to administer your own Vitamin B12 (Hydroxocobalamin) injections at home.

For many years, patients have had to attend the surgery every 12 weeks for this injection. However, many patients find that giving the injection themselves gives them more freedom and control over their condition.

This leaflet will help you decide if this is the right option for you.

Why choose self-administration?

1. Convenience

You will no longer need to book appointments, travel to the surgery, or sit in the waiting room every three months. You can do your injection at a time that suits you, in the comfort of your own home.

2. Independence

Taking charge of your own medication can feel empowering. It allows you to fit your treatment around your work, holidays, and family life without restriction.

3. Continuity

If you travel frequently or struggle to get to the surgery during opening hours, self-administration ensures you never miss a dose.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is it safe?

Yes. Thousands of patients safely inject their own medication every day (such as insulin, methotrexate, or B12). However, as with all medical procedures, there are risks. We will not let you do this alone until our Nursing Team is 100% satisfied that you are safe and confident.

How is it done?

Unlike vaccinations which often go into the arm, self-administered B12 is best injected into the thigh muscle (the *vastus lateralis*). This is because it is the safest place for you to reach comfortably with your own hands.

Will it hurt?

Most patients report that it feels similar to a scratch or a pinch. The needle used is fine and sharp. Because you are in control, you can take your time, which often makes it less painful than having someone else do it.

What equipment do I need?

We will provide a supply of needles, syringes, cotton-wool balls and plasters, and a prescription for the medicine and sharps bin, which you can collect from your pharmacy:

What are the risks?

The main risks are:

- **Injection site reaction:** Slight bruising or soreness (common).
- **Anaphylaxis:** This is a severe allergic reaction. It is **very rare** with B12, but because you will be at home, you need to know the signs (swelling of lips/tongue, difficulty breathing) and be prepared to dial 999 immediately if they occur.

Is this right for me?

Please be honest with yourself when answering these questions.

- ☐ **Do you have good use of your hands?** You need steady hands and good eyesight (with glasses if needed) to handle the small needles and glass ampoules.
- ☐ **Are you comfortable with needles?** It is normal to be a little nervous at first, but if you have a phobia of needles or blood, self-administration is likely not for you.
- ☐ **Can you reach your thigh easily?** You must be able to sit comfortably and reach the side of your thigh.
- ☐ **Are you reliable?** You will need to remember to take your injection every 12 weeks without a reminder from the practice.

What happens next?

If you decide you want to try:

1. When you are coming up for your next injection, contact the Care Navigation team and tell them: *"I have read the leaflet and would like to book a **B12 Training Appointment** with the Nurse."*
2. At this 30-minute appointment, the nurse will teach you the technique.
3. You will give yourself the injection under the nurse's supervision.
4. If you and the nurse are happy, you will be signed off as "Competent."

If you decide NO:

That is absolutely fine. You can continue to attend the surgery for your injections as normal.

If you try it and don't like it:

You can stop at any time. Just book an appointment with the nurse for your next dose and let us know you want to stop self-administering.

Contact Us

If you have further questions before deciding, please leave a message for the Nursing Team.