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BREAST FEEDING AND VITAMIN B12 DEFICIENCY

Breast feeding is universally endorsed as the best nutrition for infants. Unique features that are present in mother's milk cannot be replaced by any artificial milk.

During lactation, women have increased need of nutrients, as they are the source of nourishment for the infants too. Among those needed, vitamin B12 is vital for proper growth of the baby and wellbeing of the mother.

WOMEN AT RISK OF VITAMIN B12 DEFICIENCY

- Those who are strict vegetarians.
- Women who had undergone any surgery in past in which some part of stomach or whole stomach was removed.
- Malnourished women.

EFFECTS OF DEFICIENCY OF VITAMIN B12 ON INFANTS

Severe deficiency of Vitamin B12 in a breastfeeding mother may lead to the following abnormalities in the infant:

- Anaemia
- Growth failure
- Poor appetite
- Lethargy
- Developmental delays
- In severe cases it can eventually lead to death

SOURCE OF VITAMIN B12 FROM FOOD:

The Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) of vitamin B12 for breastfeeding women is 2.8 (microgram) mcg per day which is sufficient in normal circumstances, however much higher doses are required in cases of a deficiency which can be consulted with a doctor.

The best food sources are as follows:

- Eggs and milk
- Fish, chicken and beef
- Yogurt and cheese
- Chicken

USE OF VITAMIN B12 SUPPLEMENTS

The vitamins recommended during pregnancy have B12 in them to prevent any deficiency. However, every individual has unique dietary requirements and the decision to take additional vitamin B12 supplements should be taken in consultation with the health care provider after examining the needs of the mother and the infant.

B12 DEFICIENCY

References:

<http://ncbfc.org/>, <http://women.emedtv.com/vitamin-b12>,

