

Vitamin Deficiencies in Observant Jews

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Summary

An interesting case presentation recently appeared in an edition of the new England journal of medicine. An elderly frum jewish female from brooklyn presented to her physician with pins and needles or paraesthesias.

In her history it was discovered that a few months prior to the incident the lady had been making gefilte fish. While making the fish she occasionally tasted and tested the raw uncooked fish.

A full blood count on the woman revealed a macrocytic anemia and a deficiency of vitamin b12! What transpired is that the gefilte fish had a fish tapeworm or diphylobothrium latum in it. This worm attaches to the terminal ilium and depletes the body of vitamin b12 stores.

She even had features of subacute combined degeneration of the cord which affects the spinothalamic and spinocerebellar tracts.

She had to be put onto antihelminthic therapy and had to get regular injections of cyanocobalamin/ vitamin b12.

So just be careful when preparing gefilte fish or when eating sushi.

Another abnormality detected in observant females is that of vitamin d deficiency. With our abundant sunlight and sunshine, one would think that this would not be a problem in South Africa. But with the custom of long dresses and long-sleeved shirts there are religious females who present with osteoporosis and thinning of the bones resulting in premature hairline fractures this is all based on a deficiency of vitamin d due to not having enough exposure to the rays of the sun.

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