

# Cobalt Fact Sheet

Cobalt is part of vitamin B12, which is essential to keep the body’s nervous system and red blood cells healthy. It is safe to ingest cobalt when it is part of vitamin B12, and it is normal and healthy to have some cobalt in your body as a result. Cobalt metal and cobalt compounds other than vitamin B12 can be toxic. Cobalt metal is used in alloys that resist wear and corrosion. Some blue pigments in paint, glass, and other products contain cobalt compounds.

## **Cobalt metal and cobalt compounds, other than vitamin B12, are found in**

- Metal alloys used in a variety of applications, such as:
  - Some artificial joints for the hip and knee.
  - Hard metal tools, including cobalt-tungsten carbide tools, for drilling, cutting, and grinding hard materials like stone or concrete.
  - Some rechargeable batteries.
- Blue pigments used for many products, including paint, glass, candles, and dish detergents.

## **Possible health concerns of cobalt metal and cobalt compounds, other than vitamin B12**

- Cobalt metal and cobalt compounds, other than vitamin B12:
- Can harm the heart, thyroid, and nervous system.
  - Can cause sensitivity in the lungs and skin, including allergies.
  - May increase cancer risk.

## **Possible ways to reduce exposure to cobalt metal and cobalt compounds, other than vitamin B12**

- If you have a metal hip or knee replacement, follow your doctor’s advice for monitoring metals, including cobalt, in your blood.
- If you work with cobalt or cobalt-based tools, like cobalt-tungsten carbide tools:
  - Be sure that your work area is well ventilated, and use proper protective equipment.
  - Follow other safe work practices, including washing hands frequently, keeping work dust out of your home, and washing work clothes separately.
- Avoid taking dietary supplements containing cobalt in forms other than vitamin B12.