



## **Some chlorophyll look-alikes**

**Heme** in red blood corpuscles has a structure similar to chlorophyll, but with iron in the middle, in place of magnesium. Heme is bright red and this gives blood its colour. Like chlorophyll, heme picks up oxygen in the lungs, gills or other respiratory surfaces and releases it in the body tissues.

Another look-alike is **vitamin B<sub>12</sub>**, which has cobalt in the place of magnesium. It seems to act in a similar way to enable absorption of nutrition.

## **Is it antiseptic?**

People often think chlorophyll has antiseptic or antibacterial properties. Toothpaste ads, for instance, speak of chlorophyll content in their products, to suggest that this would put an end to decay!

It is true that the oxygen produced by chlorophyll should inhibit those bacteria that need 'anaerobic' or oxygen-free conditions. And the agents that cause tooth decay are among these. But in the crevices between teeth, in the mouth, and through the night when most tooth decay takes place, there is no sunlight. Hence, the chlorophyll in toothpaste would produce no oxygen and bacteria would go freely about their business.

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