

Vitamin D and Your Health

The impact that vitamin D has on physical and mental well being has been reported in the medical literature and continues to be researched. Vitamin D may have affect on disorders such as cancer, osteoporosis, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, depression, and possibly other mental disorders. It has been estimated that over one billion people have either vitamin D insufficiency or deficiency.

Groups who are at risk for vitamin D deficiency include the elderly, adolescents, obese individuals, and those with chronic illnesses (e.g., diabetes). Note that these same groups have also been reported to be at risk for depression.

So What Can You Do?

Sunshine has been suggested as an approach to maintain healthy vitamin D levels. Sun exposure to the arms and legs for five to ten minutes, two or three times per week, may be beneficial for maintaining vitamin D sufficiency. However, because the time of day, season, and latitude influence sunlight absorption and thus, the amount of vitamin D produced, it becomes difficult to make universal recommendations. In other words, your body's production of Vitamin D is stimulated by exposure to sunlight, this production varies based on the amount and duration of exposure, latitude (places closer to the equator have greater sun exposure such as Hawaii, Arizona, Florida), season, and race of the individual. For individuals who have darker skin, decreased vitamin D is more common. Why? Due to higher melanin levels, dark-skinned individuals experience reduced subcutaneous vitamin D production compared to those with lighter pigmentation, making them another high risk group for vitamin D deficiency

In addition, because the risk of skin cancer is associated with unprotected sun exposure, it is usually not recommended for treatment of inadequate vitamin D levels. So balance the benefit of sunlight exposure to the risk of developing skin cancer. Always check with your medical doctor for recommendations specific to your particular situation.

Individuals also obtain vitamin D through dietary sources. Dietary sources include (a) naturally-occurring vitamin D in foods, (b) fortification of foods with vitamin D, and (c) a vitamin D supplement.

Depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide and the World Health Organization predicts that it will be the second most common global burden of disease by the year 2020. Depression costs \$36.6 billion and 225 million lost workdays each year in the United States.

Unfortunately, these suggestions will not always work, and in that case it's best to seek a mental health professional to address any mental health issues.

Source: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2908269/>

Note: Information provided in this eNewsletter is designed to support, not replace the recommendation of your medical doctor or mental health provider.

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