

Vitamin D and Me

Vitamin D, the Sunshine Vitamin, has long been restricted to small dosages to avoid suspected toxicity. New research is showing that Vitamin D is important in so many areas of our biochemistry that we need more of it to keep healthy. Here is some of the latest information on Vitamin D.

What does Vitamin D do for you?

- Daily doses of 700 – 800 IU have been shown to decrease fractures and increase muscle strength, which helps prevent falls and fractures.
- Doses of as much as 1500 IU may help protect against colon and prostate cancers, as well as other types, by stopping abnormal cell growth.
- Vitamin D helps curb inflammation which may deter conditions like periodontal disease and arthritis.
- Autoimmune diseases, such as multiple sclerosis and rheumatoid arthritis, may be linked to low blood levels of Vitamin D.
- The functioning of crucial substances, like insulin, serotonin, estrogen and rennin, are influenced by D, giving D a role in deterring diabetes, easing depression, minimizing PMS discomforts and controlling blood pressure.
- Excess body fat absorbs and holds onto D, so the body can't use it. Low levels of D may interfere with the hormone, leptin, which signals the brain that you are full and should stop eating.
- Fosamax may not work properly to slow bone loss if blood levels of Vitamin D are low.

Sources of Vitamin D:

- The best source is sunshine. Ultra-violet rays from the sun cause our bodies to make Vitamin D. Having your face, arms and legs exposed to the sun for 5 to 10 minutes in the middle of the day two or three days a week provides the equivalent of 1,000 to 2,000 IU a day of D. That is now considered a safe and optimal amount by most researchers. As we age, our bodies are less efficient at making D and may require 15 minutes in the sun or supplements to get enough D. Be sure to put on sunscreen after your allotted exposure to protect your skin from skin cancer.
- The next best source is supplements, since few foods, except oily fish, milk and fortified foods, contain much Vitamin D. Most multivitamins contain only the current official recommended 400 IU of D, and use ergocalciferol (D2) which is a less potent form. Look for a multi with cholecalciferol (D3) which is better absorbed by the body. Taking calcium supplements with Vitamin D added will help increase your intake to the 600 to 1000 IU per day that is now recommended by most Vitamin D experts.
- You can ask your doctor to check your blood level of 25-hydroxyvitamin D to see whether or not you are deficient in this important vitamin.