

Practical Preventable Medicine



VITAMIN D, THE SUNLIGHT VITAMIN.

Just like plants, we need the sun to thrive. As most know, lack of sunlight makes all things grow weaker and our bones are the same. However, what many people do not know is the immune and digestive systems rely on this vitamin just as much to function properly. Vitamin D acts like a hormone to assist in cell replication and assists them to differentiate into the cell they need to be, a skin or immune cell for instance.

Because we can manufacture Vitamin D it is not considered an essential vitamin, that is, we technically speaking, do not *need* to eat it, however more incidents of this deficiency are occurring than should be in this sun-drenched nation of ours so what's going on? The daily use of sunscreens is no doubt an issue. Although we need to be aware of the risk of skin cancers, we also need to have at least 30 minutes of direct sunlight per day to make our vitamin D that in turn helps prevent Cancer. The use of sunscreens at schools when kids spend 80% of their day indoors is, in my humble opinion, overkill and we should reserve the use of sunscreens for sports days and days where we expect to be out in the sun for more than 2 hours or it's a scorcher of a day!

There also is an increase in food intolerances such as gluten along with glyphosate used in products like RoundUp have been linked to affecting the pathway by which we make this vital vitamin. Vitamin D absorption is an issue for wheat sensitive people, Coeliacs and people with their Gall bladder removed. Being a fat-soluble vitamin, without your bile that is stored in the Gall Bladder, emulsification and absorption is severely impaired as butter and oily fish are major food sources. Also vitamin D is essential for absorption of Calcium, while Magnesium is needed to convert Vitamin D into its active form from a Cholesterol component made by the liver. This does have me questioning whether the high use of anti-cholesterol drugs that stop your liver making cholesterol play a part in the widespread deficiencies that we are seeing.

So now that Winter is upon us, I'd like to highlight a very common symptom of deficiency is a form of depression known as Seasonal Affective Disorder (yes...S.A.D.) and one important way to dispel the winter blues is to boost vitamin D levels. The only way to know if you don't have enough is a blood test which I highly recommend. Other symptoms of deficiency include muscle spasms and twitches, soft protruding abdominal muscles and weak bones. Vegetarian food sources include Eggs and Mushrooms (enhanced when exposed to sunlight for 15 min before cooking) and that's about it so supplementation may be essential at this time of year. If you supplement, make sure you talk to a health professional to ensure you get the right form at the right levels.

Until next time

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Stay well
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