

The New Problem of Vitamin D Deficiency

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A surprising number of people are discovering they lack this essential and plentiful nutrient.

When it comes to Vitamin D, taking your vitamins is as easy as stepping outside. Sunshine is the primary source of this vitamin, which plays an important role in bone health and preventing chronic diseases. However, a surprising number of Americans aren't getting enough of this important nutrient, due in large part to lifestyle and environmental factors.

Vitamin D Deficiency

Vitamin D has a number of health benefits, including an important role in helping the body use calcium for bone strength. Vitamin D increases calcium absorption and increases calcium metabolism. The vitamin has also been shown to protect against a number of health problems, including increased risk of heart attack, stroke, high blood pressure, diabetes, and obesity. With risks like that, it's easy to see why doctors recommend getting your daily dose.

Still, a great number of people are suffering from Vitamin D deficiency. Obesity, limited exposure to sunlight, and certain medical problems like Crohn's disease, cystic fibrosis, or celiac disease can result in Vitamin D deficiency. In cases like these, a supplement is often discussed as a solution.

Supplements vs. Sunshine

Supplements are a viable option for Vitamin D when sunshine alone isn't enough. Certain foods like milk, fish, cereals, eggs, and some orange juices are all sources of Vitamin D, but most people aren't eating enough of these foods to satisfy the daily recommended amount to serve as a substitute for sunshine. In situations like this, supplements may be the answer.

Vitamin D supplements come in two forms: Vitamin D2 and Vitamin D3. Although both are beneficial to muscular and immune health, D3 is the vitamin to choose since it can be manufactured naturally by the human body when exposed to sunlight. Vitamin D2 is found only in plants and is not as effective in maintaining Vitamin D levels.

There are varying recommendations regarding what dosage of Vitamin D supplement is appropriate, but anywhere from 200 to 600 international units (IUs) is acceptable, depending on your age. Since bone health is a concern for older adults, the recommended daily allowance often increases around age 50 to 800 to 1000 IUs.

If you are lucky enough to be able to enjoy the sunshine, it's best to limit your exposure to a half hour per day. If you'll be out longer than that, especially when the sun is at its highest between 10am and 3pm, make sure you are wearing sunscreen.

Talk to your Doctor

Your method of Vitamin D intake is unique to your health. There is not a one-size-fits-all approach to making sure you're getting enough, so be sure to talk to your doctor about what's best for you. If you're not sure you're getting enough, schedule a visit to have your Vitamin D tested.

For an appointment with Dr. Gottlieb in Audubon, call 484.956.6000



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