

MAY 2, 2004

## An unrecognized epidemic

An under-estimated disease in our country is hypo-vitaminosis D of which 70 percent of Americans are deficient. I have been advocating at least 1000 units of vitamin D a day, and for those who have vitamin D deficiency, a single capsule of 50,000 IU's are prescribed once a week. Natural sources of vitamin D include milk, fortified orange juice and cold water fatty fish with high Omega 3's, such as salmon, sardines and mackerel.

The 200-400 IU's we get from a multivitamin is not enough. Everyone knows vitamin D is good for bones. What we don't realize is that we do not get enough naturally. Vitamin D deficiency causes a host of problems other than rickets and osteoporosis to include cancer (particularly prostate), rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's, heart disease and as detailed in The Proceedings of Mayo Clinic earlier this year, muscle aches and pain.

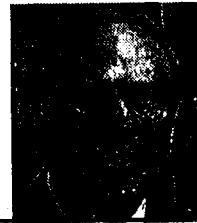
Vitamin D is made from cholesterol in our skin in the presence of UVB light. Also, in the presence of sunshine, vitamin D is further metabolized to 25-hydroxyvitamin D with weak activity, but again changed in the kidney to the potent hormone 1,25-hydroxyvitamin D. This controls calcium metabolism, adrenal function, production of enzymes and growth of cells.

Science has known that vitamin D is produced more by the action of the sun in fair rather than in dark-skinned folks. Thirty minutes of good sunlight a day is needed for the former, whereas the darker skinned individuals may require several hours. Therefore, the darker the skin of the individual, the more likely vitamin D deficiency. It has taken thousands of years for our skin color to adapt to latitude. In theory, we should all have olive skin such as Native Americans, but much of our

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nation's population is only transplanted from 200 years in northern Europe and have much fairer skin. Hence, we are a mismatch to our sunlight environment. The use of sun screen that filters out UVB also screens out vitamin D.

Now, there is a blood test that is easily obtained by your doctor. This is 25 Hydroxy D of which the optimal level is between 45 and 50. There is no fancy new drug on the market that the drug companies can become rich by, such as the cholesterol lowering drugs, making the multi-billion dollar statin drug by big pharmaceutical companies. So physicians are not being pushed to check levels and/or even prescribe this healthy natural product. A vitamin D level is worth obtaining and if your level is too low, you need to increase this vitamin.

Although vitamin D can be produced from the tanning beds, which do emit UVB, this is the same wave length that produces more skin cancer than UVA, which makes us tan. In addition to skin cancer with the tanning beds, the X-rays emitted from the end of the bulbs and the high level of electromagnetic force coming from the magnetic ballast that provide the current to these fluorescent lights disturbs the natural functions of our body, so I do not recommend them for vitamin D supplementation.