

Orthopaedic Connection

Vitamin D: There is Hope

By Thomas J. Haverbush, M.D.
Orthopaedic Surgeon

Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

To review briefly what I have been talking about the past two weeks:

- Patients associate healthy bones with getting adequate Calcium. That's important but,
- You have to have enough Vitamin D in your blood to help absorb the Calcium.
- Vitamin D increases Calcium absorption in the small intestine and allows Calcium to enter the bloodstream.
- If you don't get enough Vitamin D, the Calcium level in your blood drops.
- Low Calcium in the blood causes parathyroid hormone to take Calcium from the bones.
- Oops! The bones become depleted of Calcium - You see where we are going?

The ABC's of Vitamin D

Foods rich in Vitamin D are few.

Salmon, tuna, sardines, egg yolks

Fortified milk, some yogurts

Some cereals and some Calcium-fortified orange juice

Skim or low fat milk may not contain much Vitamin D because it is fat soluble. When the excess milk fat is removed, Vitamin D goes bye-bye too.

Screening For Vitamin D

Regular screening for Vitamin D levels in blood, specifically 25-hydroxyvitamin D is rarely done.

The standard reference range is 30 - 80 nanograms per ml.

Eighty percent of our patients are below 30.

I had my Vitamin D level done recently by Gratiot Medical Center lab. My result was a very low normal 36. Levels above 50 are preferable.

Sun Exposure

Sun exposure for the sake of Vitamin D is suffering because of the real concern of skin cancer risk. People wear sun protective clothing and apply sunscreen. For most of my patients I'm sure the amount of Vitamin D they get from sun exposure is very small. Even if you do get a little exposure in Summer months, the rest of the year you get none.

Supplementary Sunshine

A growing number of physicians including me are recommending a minimum intake of 1000iu per day. The National Osteoporosis Foundation recommends this.

However, in patients over 60 and postmenopausal women, 2000iu of Vitamin D is required.

Cholecalciferol-Vitamin D3 is from animal sources and is the best supplement. It is available in 400, 800, 1000iu.

Food and fortified food sources of Vitamin D are very important. Food provides a package of nutrients that is in an approximate ratio needed by the body.

However, even with a healthy diet, older people need to take Vitamin D supplements to meet their higher needs.

In Closing -

Vitamin D deficiency is under recognized and therefore under treated by the medical community worldwide despite growing literature studies that demonstrate a huge clinical impact on the orthopaedic patient population.

Vitamin D Deficiency is truly a Silent Epidemic. I hope this information presented the last 3 weeks will increase the awareness of our patients.

I certainly plan to make some changes to raise my Vitamin D level to at least 50. I hope you will do the same.

Stay tuned for more important Vitamin D information in the future.

Answers to all your Orthopaedic Surgery and musculoskeletal questions can be answered by logging onto www.orthopodsurgeon.com, which can take you to Your Orthopaedic Connection. Check it out.

Our goal as always is simple - To help people return to more pain free, functional lives.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush