

Argus Orthopaedic Zone

Vitamin D: Our Great 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.

For much more information about all the Orthopaedic Surgery and musculoskeletal problems I treat in the office and hospital log onto our office teaching website www.orthopodsurgeon.com that can take you to Your Orthopaedic Connection.

As always - Our goal 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