

THE POWERHOUSE FOR YOUR HEART - VITAMIN D

There is now overwhelming evidence that vitamin D3 is essential for your heart and cardiovascular system. In a study published in January, 2018, in the International Journal of Nanomedicine, the outcome suggests that vitamin D plays a vital role in protecting and restoring the damage to your endothelium (the thin layer of tissue that lines the blood vessels within your vascular system) done by serious health conditions such as atherosclerosis, diabetes, high blood pressure, insulin resistance and tumor growth. The study also suggests that the addition of vitamin D in the diet also triggers nitric oxide, a molecule which plays an important role in controlling blood flow and preventing blood clot formation in your blood vessels. Vitamin D3 was also shown to significantly reduce oxidative stress in your vascular system, resulting in prevention of development and/or progression of CVD. Low vitamin D has been shown to contribute to arterial stiffness and impaired blood vessel relaxation.

Research also confirms the link between vitamin D deficiency and high blood pressure. When study participants are given daily vitamin D supplements and levels are brought closer to the optimal range of 60-80 ng/ml (see below), they experienced an average drop in systolic blood pressure of 4-5 mmHg.

So, when is the last time you had your vitamin D levels checked? Far too often I have had nutrition clients bring in a copy of recent blood work showing less than optimal levels of vitamin D. Sadly, their docs believe that if the level is 30 ng/ml (lab range is 30-100 ng/ml) then they are doing fine. This is a grossly suboptimal range! For optimal health, you want your level to be in the 60-80 ng/ml range. Unfortunately, a large majority of people in the U.S. are severely deficient in vitamin D regardless of race or nationality. The late winter average level of vitamin D is only about 15-18 ng/ml, a severely deficient state! It's now been estimated that 85% of Americans and 95% of U.S. senior citizens are deficient.

Other benefits of optimal vitamin D levels include:

- Increasing your body's natural anti-inflammatory cytokines
- Suppression of vascular calcification
- Decreased risk of developing type 2 diabetes
- Decreased risk of developing early age-related ocular degeneration (AMD)

Signs and symptoms that you may be deficient in vitamin D include:

- *Achy or broken bones.* Since vitamin D helps your body absorb calcium, it also plays a role in bone health.
- *By age 50, our kidneys may be less effective at metabolizing inactive vitamin D to active vitamin D. By age 70, our bodies produce approximately 1/3 less vitamin D through sun exposure than it did in previous years.*
- *If you are overweight or obese, you should increase your intake of vitamin D. Since vitamin D is fat-soluble, if your fat cells uptake too much, less is available for use elsewhere in the body.*
- *If you have darker skin, this means you naturally have more melanin. Melanin determines your skin pigmentation and protects your body from harmful UV radiation. Melanin also impairs your skin's ability to produce vitamin D from sunlight. If you have darker skin, it's possible you may need up to 10 times more sun exposure to produce adequate vitamin D as compared to a person with much lighter skin.*

So there you have it, the takeaway here is that all of us should get our vitamin D levels checked every couple of years. It's important and it could save your life.



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