

Vitamin D - the Sunshine Vitamin

In our overfed and undernourished society, nutrient deficiencies are extremely common and some have hit epidemic status. If I had to list the top 5 they would be Vitamin D, Magnesium, B12, Collagen & Omega 3's. **Vitamin D** and Magnesium fight for first place with more than 80% of Americans being critically deficient. Vitamin D also ranks at the top of the list for nutrients that support & maintain a strong, healthy immune system. Basic nutrients (vitamins & minerals) are the raw materials our body needs to produce energy, make hormones & neurotransmitters, keep our brain working and support every organ & body system.

Vitamin D is a secosteroid hormone, more than it is an actual vitamin. Our body synthesizes it from sunshine and cholesterol. Hormones are chemical messengers that transport information throughout the body. Vitamin D is stored in fat cells & the liver and plays a role in more than 3,000 processes in the body and affects every body system, especially the immune system. Vitamin D deficiency is linked to many chronic diseases and disorders including: obesity, insulin resistance, type 2 diabetes, mood disorders, anxiety & depression, hypertension, pregnancy complications, memory/cognitive dysfunction, osteoporosis, autoimmune diseases, certain cancers, systemic inflammatory diseases, immune system suppression, abnormal phosphorus, calcium or parathyroid hormone. Also, getting sick often with colds & viruses can be linked to Vitamin D deficiency.

Doctors are slowly beginning to understand the importance of Vitamin D and are ordering the blood test more often. If you have this blood test, take note of the reference range on the lab report, "normal" will be from 30-100. This is a huge swing, and just being somewhere between these numbers doesn't qualify as OK. Like most lab ranges they have not been updated in more than 30 years. **A Vitamin D level of 30 or below is extremely deficient, and under 50 is low.** For ideal health, and to receive all of the protective benefits of Vitamin D, **the optimal range is 70-90.** Because it's fat soluble, it can take some time to get that number up so it's a good idea to have your Vitamin D level rechecked about every 6 months.

Vitamin D is one of very few nutrients not widely available in food. **The best way to increase your level of Vitamin D is to spend some time in the sun.** Not getting burned, just 20-30 minutes outside, before noon or after 6, will cause your body to produce it. Doing this will also boost your mood and immune system, especially important for anyone suffering from stress, anxiety, depression or chronic disease. The first thing to do if you suspect you're deficient is to find out your Vitamin D level. Ask your Dr. to do the simple blood test, 25-hydroxyvitamin D. **If you need to increase it, here's what you can do: Start getting outside a little bit everyday Add some of the foods mentioned above into your diet. Speak with a knowledgeable practitioner about a good quality supplement and the daily dosage.** It's usually not a good idea to just start taking lots of supplements on your own. You want to make sure you'll absorb it, that it's clean, the dose is appropriate for you, the time of day to take it and with/without food. *D3 is the Vitamin D referred to in this article.

***TIP: Not all supplements are created equal. Inexpensive drug store supplements contain soy, toxins and artificial colors. The nutrients in them are usually synthetic which is why they're inexpensive.*

