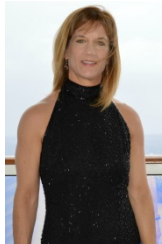


"Life is not about waiting for the storms to pass...it's about learning how to dance in the rain!"

- Vivian Green

I absolutely love how true this quote is! Each and every one of us faces some kind of adversity or turmoil in our lives. There seems to be neither rhyme nor reason why we experience it. But we must remember that it's not the negative things that ultimately impact the happiness we experience in our day-to-day lives. Instead, it's how we react to it that truly impacts us. When you're going through a tough time, do you spend time feeling sorry for yourself or can you learn to dance in the rain? Choose to learn how to dance. If you need some help, be sure to reach out to me to get you started.

Yours in health,



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Why We Need Vitamin D



I'm a self-confessed sun worshiper, so I'm sure my body produces plenty of Vitamin D. So it was quite surprising to find a clinical review published in April in *The Journal of the American Osteopathic Association* that stated up to a BILLION people worldwide most likely don't have sufficient levels of vitamin D to keep them healthy. You probably won't guess the reason for this finding: It's sunscreen! We're told to slather it on whenever we go outside to protect our skin from the sun so we don't get skin cancer. Unfortunately, those lotions and sprays are turning out to be a bit of a curse because it's inhibiting our bodies from converting the sunshine to Vitamin D. It's super important to remember that there are healthy levels of sun time without protection that are critical to increase your body's level of Vitamin D.

You're probably wondering what Vitamin D is and why it's so important that our bodies have sufficient levels. It's actually a hormone produced by sun exposure to the skin. Just about every cell in our body has receptors for Vitamin D, mainly because it's critical for many of the body's functions. Here are a few of its important roles.

- Helps control the growth of cells, which can be super important for cancer prevention. Researchers at the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine reported that increasing vitamin D levels to 40 nanograms (ng)/milliliter (ml) can cut your risk of all invasive cancers by an astonishing 67%. There seems to be a correlation between low levels of Vitamin D and breast cancer.
- Helps improve your heart because it triggers the production of nitric oxide. This is a molecule that helps control blood flow and helps prevent blood clot formation. Blood clots are a leading cause of stroke.
- Helps reduce oxidative stress in your vascular system, which helps prevent heart disease.
- Helps keep your brain healthy. While researching this newsletter, I located a six-year study that followed more than 1,600 people. It found that those with a vitamin D deficiency had a much higher risk of dementia and Alzheimer's disease. People in the study who were severely deficient in vitamin D had a 122% higher risk of developing both dementia and Alzheimer's, while those who were only moderately deficient had a 53% greater risk of dementia and a 69% higher risk for Alzheimer's.
- Helps with the proper functioning of the immune and neuromuscular systems, which increases your body's ability to prevent and fight the flu. This is yet another reason to avoid a flu shot.
- Helps reduce inflammation throughout the body.

When are you considered to be short on this vital nutrient? The Endocrine Society defines a deficiency as levels of less than 20 ng/ml). It defines an insufficiency as levels between 21-30 ng/ml. A study done by the University of San Diego just last month found that the minimum level to get protective benefits for your health is 60 ng/ml. Levels can be measured by a simple blood test.

There are several red flags that indicate you may have low vitamin D levels:

- **You feel sad.** Scientists have evaluated the effects of vitamin D on mental health and found those with the lowest levels of vitamin D were 11 times more likely to be depressed than those who had higher levels. There is also some thinking that vitamin D works in the same areas of the brain as the "feel-good" hormones, serotonin and dopamine, that affect your mood.
- **You're older than 50.** As you get older your skin doesn't make as much vitamin D in response to sun exposure. Also, your kidneys become less efficient at converting vitamin D into the form used by your body. Often as people get older, they unfortunately tend to spend more time indoors.
- **Your head sweats a lot.** One of the first, classic signs of vitamin D deficiency is a sweaty head. So if you're a heavy head sweater, get your levels checked.
- **You're overweight or obese.** Vitamin D is fat-soluble, which means body fat collects it. If you're carrying too many pounds, you're likely going to need more vitamin D than someone who's thinner.
- **You have darker skin.** African Americans have a higher risk of low vitamin D because people with dark skin may need as much as ****10 times**** more sun exposure to produce the same amount of vitamin D as someone with light skin.
- **You feel weak.** Low levels of vitamin D can make you feel exhausted, even if you think you're getting enough sleep.

Low levels of vitamin D are thought to play a part in many different health conditions and more research is being done to confirm it. A few of the conditions thought to be impacted by low levels of Vitamin D include the following:

- Multiple sclerosis
- Autoimmune disorders, such as rheumatoid arthritis
- Infections
- Respiratory disease, such as asthma and COPD
- Cancer

What's the best way to increase the levels of Vitamin D in your body? Several different studies I reviewed indicated that it's best to spend between 5 and 30 minutes outside at mid-day at least 2 times per week. Obviously, people with fair skin should stay on the lower end of that range. But not for the reason you might think. People with light skin actually synthesize Vitamin D faster than people with darker skin. Make sure to skip the sunscreen for these 2 short sessions per week. I was shocked to learn that sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or more reduces production of Vitamin D by an unbelievable 99%. To get the benefit of the sun, you don't have to put on your bathing suit and lie out in it like I do. You can simply go for a walk and kill two birds with one stone: exercising while increasing your Vitamin D production.

The next best source of Vitamin D is certain types of foods. Cage-free eggs, cold-water fatty fish such as salmon (be sure to buy wild not farmed), organic mushrooms and raw dairy foods such as raw milk, yogurt and cheese are some of the best sources. Raw milk products are hard to find, but I have a great source for them here in Northern Virginia.

If you choose to take a supplement, be sure it's D3, not D2. The National Academy of Medicine recommends adults take 600 IU of vitamin D3 a day. However, many natural health practitioners and experts recommend taking a much higher dose of between 4,000 and 6,000 IU of vitamin D a day in order to get your level up to the recommended 60 ng/ml. I personally take 5,000 IU per day, but I do have my levels checked about four times per year. Be sure to have your levels checked and consult with an integrative doctor (or even your own) before making any drastic changes to your daily supplementation routine. They would be the best resource to determine an amount that's best for you based on your current status and what your body needs.

Research is starting to show that proper levels of Vitamin D could play a very important role in helping to prevent all different types of cancer. As those studies are released, I'm sure I'll write about them since it's a topic so near and dear to my heart. So what are you waiting for and what have you got to lose? Start taking Vitamin D and getting out for your sun sessions ASAP.

Have a wonderful month.