

Understanding Changes to OHIP Coverage of Vitamin D Testing

Beginning December 1, 2010, the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) will only cover the cost of a vitamin D test for people with the following conditions:

- Osteoporosis and Osteopenia
- Rickets
- Malabsorption Syndromes
- Renal Disease
- Patients on medications that affect vitamin D metabolism

A review of the best available medical evidence showed that vitamin D testing in healthy adults and children is not medically necessary and that people should follow Health Canada's recommendations on diet and vitamin D supplementation.

Diet and Supplementation

Health Canada recommends that Canadians follow the advice contained in Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide.

Diet

- All Canadians over the age of two consume 500mL (two cups) of milk or fortified soy beverages every day for adequate vitamin D. Two cups of milk provide 200 International Units (IU) of vitamin D, which is an adequate amount for generally healthy people 1-50 years of age.
- Other foods rich in vitamin D include fatty fish, egg yolks, fish liver oil, and some types of mushrooms.

Supplementation

- If supplementation is needed, Health Canada recommends individuals aged two to fifty years take vitamin D supplements of 200 IU per day.
- In addition to following Canada's Food Guide, everyone over the age of 50 should take a daily vitamin D supplement of 400 IU. The amount of vitamin D in foods as recommended by the Food Guide is not enough to meet the Adequate Intakes necessary for people over the age of 50 to help reduce the risk of bone fractures.

Everyone's health circumstances are unique, so it is important to discuss the need for vitamin D testing and supplementation with your health care provider.

For more information on Canada's Food Guide and Vitamin D supplementation visit Health Canada's website at www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/vitamin/vita-d-eng.php, or visit Eat Right Ontario's website at <http://www.eatrightontario.ca/en/ViewDocument.aspx?id=218&Topic=7&Cat=379>

The Evidence

In June 2010, the Ontario Health Technology Advisory Committee (OHTAC) made recommendations on vitamin D testing based on a review of current medical evidence. OHTAC found that the routine

use of vitamin D testing cannot be justified and also noted that Health Canada has made recommendations on the adequate daily intake of vitamin D for healthy Canadians.

The Ontario Health Technology Advisory Committee is an arm's length expert committee that makes recommendations to the health care system and the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care about the best health technologies for Ontario.

The Facts about Vitamin D

- Since 2004, vitamin D testing has increased by approximately 2,500 percent
- 29,000 tests were performed in 2004. More than 700,000 were performed in 2009
- The Ontario Health Technology Advisory Committee found that only about five percent of Canadian adults and children are vitamin D deficient based on the recommended normal ranges.
- Individuals with darker skin pigmentation and those who live in the north are at higher risk of having low vitamin D levels and although this alone is not a basis for vitamin D testing it points to a greater need in those populations to ensure they receive adequate vitamin D through healthy diet and supplementation.

Quality and Value in Health Care

Ontario has a plan to improve the quality and value of health care by funding services that are supported by the best available medical evidence. By using medical evidence in making decisions about the care of patients, we are making the best possible use of our health care resources. The change in vitamin D testing reflects this approach. The health system cannot continue to pay for tests and procedures that are not medically necessary.

Countries around the world are shifting their focus in health care to emphasize quality and value, and Ontario is no exception. We know health care costs are rising at a rate that threatens to become unsustainable. If we want to ensure that our health care system has the resources it needs to care for Ontarians tomorrow, we need to start making better use of those resources today. Ordering medically unnecessary tests is an inappropriate use of limited resources that are needed elsewhere. The best evidence available clearly indicates that routine vitamin D testing in the general population is not medically necessary. Acting on that evidence, the Ontario government has stopped funding such testing and will use those resources in ways that deliver real benefit to Ontarians.

For more information visit www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/ohip/changes/vitamin_d.aspx