

The Providence Journal

February 9, 2008

America's dangerous heliophobia

By MICHAEL HOLICK

LIFE ON OUR PLANET requires sunlight to survive. And most organisms work hard to get it. Jungle reptiles often compete with each other to find the highest, warmest surfaces for sunbathing. Rain-forest plants race to fill rare, sunny openings in the thick canopy left by fallen trees. And some flowers even bend their stems to follow the sun's movement across the sky.

Humans also need sensible sun exposure. But unlike the rest of life on earth, we actively work to avoid the sun. In recent years, several dubious groups have launched smear campaigns against the sun, blurring the line between overexposure — a very real threat to our health — and any exposure at all. The sunscreen industry constantly warns the public to “cover up” before venturing outside. Store shelves are flooded with products promising increasingly higher sun-protecting factors (SPF). And the latest children's swim trunks cover more skin than a nun's habit. This frantic obscuration has hurt us in an unexpected area: nutrition. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that more than 180 million Americans — 60 percent of the population — are not getting enough Vitamin D.

Though certain foods contain trace amounts, it's virtually impossible to get enough vitamin D through diet alone. The National Institute of Health lists sunlight as “the most important source of vitamin D.” Our bodies produce the aptly named “sunshine vitamin” when ultraviolet (UV) rays reach our skin. To produce the amount that most experts now agree is the minimum daily requirement (about 1,000 to 2,000 international units), one would need to expose 25 percent of one's body for around 10 minutes at least 2-3 times a week during spring, summer and early fall.

We don't even come close.

Geography, weather, pollution and sunscreen limit the amount of UV available. Even factors as simple as the season play a role. For instance, during this time of year, sunlight is a scarce commodity, especially for Americans in the northern states.

Without Vitamin D, our bodies cannot build strong bones or maintain a healthy immune system. New research indicates that the sunshine vitamin plays a vital role in the prevention of many deadly illnesses, including multiple sclerosis, tuberculosis, schizophrenia and heart disease. Health officials estimate that as many as 47,000 cancer deaths could be prevented each year in America if adequate vitamin D levels were attained. But sun-scare messengers and health “experts” irresponsibly urge us to wear lotions and cosmetics with added SPF, which can block up to 100 percent of our vitamin D production.

Vitamin D deficiency is contributing to hundreds of thousands of cases of chronic and terminal diseases. That means that the sunlight myths perpetuated by the skin-care industry aren't only misleading. They're deadly. We need sunlight as we need water, food and a roof over our heads.

It would be false prudence to completely avoid the sun to prevent skin cancer. Yes, too much UV light is unhealthy. However, too much of any good thing can be bad for your health. And too much UV avoidance can be downright dangerous.

When it comes to sunlight, the old adage holds true: Everything in moderation.

*Michael Holick, M.D., is the director of the vitamin D, skin, and bone research laboratory at Boston University Medical Center. He authored *The UV Advantage*.*



February 25, 2008

Consequences of Lack of Sun

It's not often you see the sun during Mid-Michigan winters. For the most part it's hidden behind a mass of gray clouds.

"I am so tired of winter," says Mary Prinze. "I am praying for spring — any time, any second would be fine with me with me."

"Gloomy, down in the dumps, it's depressing," Laurence Bush says.

That lack of sunshine can not only affect a person's emotional health, it can affect a person's physical health. That's because the sun provides Vitamin D, without it there's an increased risk of colon cancer, breast cancer and heart disease.

Dr. Kimberly Johnson with Charlotte Medical Group says the most significant disease from a lack of Vitamin D is osteoporosis.

"Osteoporosis can be caused by a calcium deficiency, but in order to adequately absorb your calcium, you have to have enough Vitamin D to facilitate that absorp-

tive that process."

A recent study released by Boston University School of Medicine, found that people living in states in northern latitudes are 74 percent Vitamin D deficient during the month of February. For the average person, at least 400 international units of Vitamin D a day is recommended.

"Most dairy products are fortified with Vitamin D now, such as milk, cottage cheese, cheeses, yogurt, fatty fishes, fishes with omega-three oils which are also good for the heart have Vitamin D," Dr. Johnson explains.

The UV Foundation recommends supplements and even moderate exposure to UV rays from tanning beds. The best source is always the sun, of course, but when that sun refuses to peak out from behind the clouds, your next best bet is to get Vitamin D artificially.

Sun-Sentinel

Ft. Lauderdale Florida

January 20, 2008

Public suffering from overload of advice

By James Bowers

Twenty-four hour news channels constantly squawk about the latest studies on food, drink and health. "Ground-breaking" articles on diet and wellness flood the papers every day. And science headlines increasingly read like the style section. Rather than educate people about healthy choices, this revolving door of health reports only fans the fears of an already anxious public.

The prognosis: Americans are suffering from an overdose of conflicting advice.

If you need an example, look no further than your fridge. "Experts" used to tell us eggs were little more than cholesterol bombs served sunny side up. Now, eggs are back at the top of the grocery list. Nutritionists have crowned them the perfect food, delivering tons of protein and vitamins for a mere 75 calories a pop. Same egg, new spin.

This paradox extends to other dietary debates: butter vs. margarine, regular vs. decaf, carbs vs. protein.

Over the past several decades, the health community has even been sending us mixed messages about sunshine. Following the invention of sun protection factor (SPF) in the last half of the 20th century, health reports drove Americans to hide from the sun. People lathered on sunscreen, layered their clothes, or simply stayed indoors. Time magazine brought the sun out of exile this winter by naming Vitamin D one of the "Top 10 Medical Breakthroughs" of 2007. In a number of prominent studies, researchers dis-

covered that Vitamin D not only helps to strengthen bones, but can also ward off diabetes, prevent multiple sclerosis, and even thwart many different cancers. Unfortunately, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that more than 180 million Americans are not getting enough.

From eggs to sunlight, the advice dispensed by modern health reports illustrates the law of unintended consequences. For instance, nutrition activists have convinced many cities across the nation to ban trans fats (aka "margarine") and force local businesses to switch to a new oil, interesterified fat. Now, it looks like the replacement oil is actually worse.

Of course, we are sometimes faced with incontrovertible evidence, like the dangers of smoking. But clear-cut cases are few and far between.

Normally, decisions about our health involve a complex trade-off between risks and benefits that can't be boiled down to catchy headlines or news clips. There are no absolutes, no good vs. evil, no all-or-none.

As the saying goes, it's the dose that makes the poison. And a day without sunshine is like, well ... a day without sunshine.

James Bowers is the managing director at the Center for Consumer Freedom

The Clarion-Ledger

Jackson Mississippi

February 26, 2008

Deficiency among Americans prevalent; diet, sun key factors

Daphne M. Higgins • Special to The Clarion-Ledger

Dorothy Jasper of Jackson, a retired registered nurse, understands the importance of including vitamin D in her diet.

During nursing training, she learned vitamin D is essential to a healthy life. Now she's making sure her 1-year-old grandson, Jarrett Vernon Jasper Jr., gets the proper amount.

"He's drinking whole milk now. His pediatrician has not recommended that he take anything else at the moment. I know that making sure he receives the proper amount of vitamin D will ward off a lot of health problems later," she said. "Why anyone would refrain from getting vitamin D is a complete mystery to me."

Though reports vary on the exact numbers, experts report vitamin D deficiency is highly prevalent in the United States. The National Institutes of Health reports the adequate international unit intake for vitamin D is 200 for persons up to age 50; 400 for persons 51-70 and 600 for those 70 and older.

Vitamin D is synthesized or produced naturally when skin is exposed to the sun's ultraviolet rays.

February has been named Vitamin D Deficiency Month. The recognition comes as an effort by the UV Foundation in Virginia to raise awareness regarding vitamin D deficiency and the negative health effects that can occur.

"There have been recent studies that have expanded topics based on solid research showing vitamin D can reduce the risk of some cancers and other health issues," said Dr. Patrick Gregory, who specializes in homeopathic medicine and works as a health educator for Central Mississippi Health Services in Jackson.

"The general population is unaware of the recent research, and many health professionals have not paid much attention to it either. We need to properly communicate that vitamin D intake is necessary and especially important within the African-American community, especially for those of a darker skin tone who have a more difficult time getting the proper amount of sunlight."

One report that supports Gregory's comments - "Vitamin D and African Americans" published in the Journal of Nutrition

(April 2006) - also concludes vitamin D insufficiency is more prevalent among many African Americans because pigmentation reduces vitamin D production in the skin.

The report says it is becoming more apparent that vitamin D protects against other chronic conditions, including cardiovascular disease and diabetes, all of which are as prevalent or more prevalent among blacks than whites.

"It's easy for it to go under the radar," said Dr. Chad Rhoden, clinical and research director in the Department of Preventive Medicine at Baptist Medical Center. To detect deficiency, Rhoden recommends getting a blood test that checks for 25-hydroxyvitamin D, a precursor to the active form of vitamin D.

Rickets and osteomalacia are classic conditions that can result from vitamin D deficiency. Rickets causes skeletal deformities. Osteomalacia causes weak bones and muscles. Fortified milk has made rickets a rare condition in America.

Some studies point out vitamin D can maintain a healthy immune system, and inadequate levels can predispose people to hypertension, Rhoden said. Higher levels of vitamin D are linked to lower rates of breast and colon cancer. Some research also shows fewer falls among elderly who have adequate levels of vitamin D.

Vitamin D's "major function is to maintain normal blood level of calcium," Rhoden said. Without it, bones become thin and brittle.

Vitamin D deficiency can occur for a variety of reasons. Rhoden said people at risk include those who live in regions with little sun exposure, especially during the winter months or in regions with lots of smog; babies who are exclusively breast-fed; people with absorption problems in their digestive tract; those with milk allergies or who are lactose intolerant; strict vegetarians and homebound individuals.

Older adults' skin may not be able to synthesize vitamin D, leading to hip fractures. Using sunscreen that blocks the sun's ultraviolet rays can affect levels, and Rhoden said skin pigmentation plays a role re-

gardless of race.

Though Mississippi gets its fair share of sunlight, those who work all day in an office and only come out at night or those who sleep in the day and work at night could be at risk, Rhoden said.

To combat the deficiency, experts recommend sun exposure, dietary changes and supplements.

One controversial method to acquire vitamin D is through ultraviolet light from tanning beds—a method most dermatologists denounce.

Fortified foods such as milk, cheese, ready-to-eat breakfast cereals, salmon, sardines, tuna and whole eggs are top sources. "It's always better to get it through dietary habits," Rhoden said. Taking too many supplements could lead to toxic levels, and too much sun exposure has other adverse effects.

Gregory said the toxic level of vitamin D is thought to be about 40,000 IU taken daily over time. Most supplements available to the public are 400 IU or 1,000 IU. Gregory and Rhoden predict the suggested IU will one day increase.

One vegetable that is a good source of vitamin D is the mushroom. Preliminary research suggests ultraviolet light may boost levels of vitamin D in mushrooms, according to the Mushroom Council, an organization composed of fresh market producers and importers.

The natural process of "enriching" mushrooms by briefly exposing mushrooms grown in the dark to light for five minutes may boost existing vitamin D levels from 15 IU to as much as 100 percent of the daily value of 400 IU.

The industry is investigating ways to make mushrooms enriched with vitamin D through light enhancement commercially available.

"Mushrooms are the only natural fresh vegetable or fruit that contains vitamin D. "Mushrooms contain ergosterol - a plant sterol - that is converted to vitamin D when exposed to the right amount of sunlight," said Mona Calvo, a nutritionist with the Food and Drug Administration.

The Reporter

Lansdale, Pennsylvania

February 28, 2008

Vitamin D: Essential to health

By Tony Di Domizio, Staff Writer

You won't know it just by looking at yourself if you've got a Vitamin D deficiency, but you'll feel it in your bones.

February is Vitamin D Deficiency Month, and dermatologists and the UV Foundation wants to make people aware of the importance of the necessary vitamin.

"We all need it," said Dr. Michael Stierstorfer of East Penn Dermatology in Upper Gwynedd. "It is especially important for regulating calcium metabolism in the body and helps prevent internal types of cancer. Our defense system and immune function is dependent on Vitamin D, so it's very important that we have enough of it."

Vitamin D is a group of fat-soluble prohormones and the two major forms are Vitamin D2, or ergocalciferol, and Vitamin D3, or cholecalciferol. Other forms include Vitamin D1, Vitamin D4, and Vitamin D5.

Vitamin D2 is not produced by the body and is found in plant and fungal sources. Vitamin D3 is found in animal sources and is produced in the skin, but for it to be effective it must react with ultraviolet B radiation which is most commonly found in sunlight.

Without enough Vitamin D, the body cannot regulate calcium and phosphorus levels in the blood. This in turn affects the absorption of the vitamin from food in the intestines and its reabsorption in the kidneys. The vitamin is also essential in bone formation and it boosts the immune system.

The need for Vitamin D in a healthy diet can best be credited to Edward Mellanby, Elmer McCollum and Adolf Windaus.

Mellanby determined in the early 1920s that a Vitamin D deficiency was a major cause of rickets, a childhood disease where long bones are deformed and impeded in growth. In 1921, McCollum identified a substance in fats could prevent rickets, and because it was the fourth vitamin identified, it was called Vitamin D.

A lack of Vitamin D can also lead to osteoporosis, a disease where bone mineral density is reduced and bone fragility is heightened; and osteomalacia, a disorder that causes bone-thinning and muscle weakness.

Tim Miller, of the UV Foundation, said a lack of Vitamin D can also increase risks of heart disease and multiple sclerosis.

"We get Vitamin D from ultraviolet light," he said, "and a decrease in exposure to the sun has created an increase in deficiency of the vitamin."

Miller said the UV Foundation recommends people get 20 minutes of sun exposure before slathering on sunscreen, or even five to seven minutes in a tanning bed.

Stierstorfer said as a dermatologist, he sees a lot of people with skin cancer from too much sun exposure and it's becoming a major problem.

"We really do strongly advise people to be careful with sun exposure and avoid tanning or burning," he said. "The amount of sun you need to convert Vitamin D is not a lot, about five to 10 minutes three times a week on the arms, face and legs."

He recommends a sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher, especially if one is exposed to the sun longer than 10 minutes.

"Because of sunscreen use, it does decrease the body's ability to convert Vitamin D to an active form that the body can use," he said. "We think it's best to continue to protect from the sun, so be sure to get enough Vitamin D in your diet, either through foods or vitamin supplements."

Stierstorfer said at least 400 to 800 international units of Vitamin D a day is the recommended amount. One international unit of Vitamin D is the biological equivalent of .025 micrograms of Vitamin D2 and Vitamin D3.

"The safest route to take is taking a multivitamin with Vitamin D in it," he said. "There are also a lot of foods that are fortified with vitamins, including milk, orange juice and cereals."

He said Vitamin D is not too common in foods, but there are certain types of fatty fishes and milk fats that provide a good dietary source of Vitamin D.

The following fatty fish species are good natural sources of Vitamin D:

- Catfish, 3 oz. provides 425 IU
- Cooked salmon, 3.5 oz. provides 360 IU
- Cooked mackerel, 3.5 oz. provides 345 IU
- Canned sardines, 1.75 oz. provides 250 IU
- Canned tuna, 3 oz. provides 200 IU
- Cooked eel, 3.5 oz. provides 200 IU
- Cod liver oil, 1 tbs. provides 1,360 IU

About a half-cup of mushrooms provides more than 2,700 IU of Vitamin D2, especially if exposed to five minutes of UV light. One whole egg provides 20 IU of Vitamin D3.

There is a thing such as taking too much Vitamin D. Stierstorfer said getting too much of the vitamin can cause too much calcium in the blood and lead to skin problems.

Lack of sunlight could cause vitamin D deficiency

While the cold winter weather may put you in a bad mood and keep you indoors, one group says it can also have an adverse health impact. Tim Miller is a spokesman for the U.V. Foundation and says many people in Iowa and other Midwestern states aren't getting enough sunlight.

Miller says that results in vitamin D deficiency, which he says can lead to increased risk for colon, prostate and breast cancer, M.S. and an increase in children reporting rickets. Miller says there are a lot of remedies including supplements and tanning beds. He says the recommended level of vitamin D is one-thousand units per day.

He says you can look on the side of the supplement bottle to see how much that is. One serving of salmon has 900

units, so that would cover a day. One glass of milk is 400 units, and five to seven minutes twice a week in a tanning bed would cover the need.

Miller says supplementing your vitamin D intake is important in the winter months, then you must also be sure to get some sunlight in the spring. Miller says you need 15 to 20 minutes of exposure in the sun before you put on your sunscreen.

A recent study released by Boston University School of Medicine, found that people living in Iowa and other northern latitude states are 74-percent Vitamin D deficient during the month of February. And a Harvard Medical School study published in the New England Journal of Medicine has reported that 60-percent of Americans are vitamin D deficient.



February 26, 2008

Most Iowans Need More Vitamin-D in the Winter

IOWA CITY—If storm after storm is giving you the winter blues, we have some more bad news. It turns out a slip and fall on the ice could be especially dangerous if your vitamin D levels are low. And just about everyone living in Iowa is low right now.

In February our days are shorter and the skies are cloudy. Winter takes its toll on us mentally. But it is also a drain on our vitamin D. Experts say that can lead to all kinds of problems. Registered dietitian Sue Little said, “We’re at more risk for multiple sclerosis, higher risk for diabetes, higher risk for falls and muscle weakness. The list goes on.”

In the summer, Iowans only need to be outside for about 10 minutes to get enough vitamin D. But in February, it is a much different story. Little said, “You’d have to stay outside naked for like five hours to get enough

vitamin d synthesis this time of year.”

There is simply not enough sun in Iowa in February to get all the vitamin D you need, so you need to go shopping. Little says a glass of milk a day will get you 10-percent of what you need. Fatty fish like salmon is also a good source of vitamin D. But your best bet might be a supplement. Little said, “I usually don’t recommend supplements, but for this situation we probably need one thousand IU’s per day.”

A vitamin D supplement will replenish what your body uses and loses in the winter. And little says nearly every Iowan needs more. Studies show three out of four of us are vitamin D deficient in February.

Little says a supplement should not replace vitamin D rich foods. The pills should be considered an addition to your diet.

United Press International

February 21, 2008

Many vitamin D deficient in winter

People living in northern latitudes have minimal if any previtamin D3 production in winter, a U.S. study found.

Senior author Dr. Michael Holick, director of the General Clinical Research Center at Boston University School of Medicine, said increased skin pigmentation, application of a sunscreen, aging and clothing have a dramatic effect on previtamin D3 production in the skin.

Holick said 45 nursing home residents who were taking a multivitamin that contained 400 IU of vitamin D2 — derived from fungal and plant sources — showed a dramatic

decline in their 25(OH)D levels, an accurate measure of the amount of vitamin D in the body, from the end of summer to the beginning of the following summer.

The study, published in the March issue of the Journal of Bone and Mineral Research, found 49 percent were vitamin D deficient in August, 67 percent were deficient in November, 74 percent in February and 78 percent in May.

Most experts agree that a minimum of 1,000 IU of vitamin D per day is necessary to maintain circulating concentrations of vitamin D, the researchers said.

Vitamin D Deficiency Month

Here are two facts you might not already know. First, 2008 is a leap year. And second, February is Vitamin D Deficiency month. That means you have a whole extra day this year to learn about a third fact you probably haven't heard: sunlight is good for us.

That's right. Life on our planet needs light to survive. From jungle reptiles to rain forest plants, most organisms work hard to get enough. Humans also need sensible sun exposure. But unlike the rest of life on earth, we actively work to avoid the sun.

In recent years, several dubious groups have launched smear campaigns against the sun, blurring the line between overexposure—a very real threat to our health—and any exposure at all. The sunscreen industry constantly warns the public to “cover up” before venturing outside. Store shelves are flooded with products promising increasingly higher sun protecting factors (SPF). And the latest children's swim trunks cover more skin than a nun's habit.

This frantic obscuration has hurt us in an unexpected area: nutrition. According to Harvard researchers, about 60 percent of the population—180 million Americans—don't get enough vitamin D.

Though certain foods contain trace amounts, it's virtually impossible to get enough vitamin D through diet alone. The National Institute of Health lists sunlight as “the most important source of vitamin D.” Our bodies produce the aptly named “sunshine vitamin” when ultraviolet (UV) rays reach our skin. In order to produce the amount that most experts now agree is the minimum daily requirement (about 1,000 to 2,000 international units), an individual would need to expose 25 percent of his/her body for around 10 minutes at least 2-3 times a week during spring, summer and early fall.

We don't even come close. Geography, weather,

pollution, and sunscreen limit the amount of UV available. Even factors as simple as the season play a role. During this time of year, sunlight is a scarce commodity, especially for Americans in the northern states. (That's one of the reasons that February is the month we highlight our nation's deficiency in vitamin D.)

Without Vitamin D, our bodies cannot build strong bones or maintain a healthy immune system. New research indicates that the sunshine vitamin plays a vital role in the prevention of many deadly illnesses, including multiple sclerosis, tuberculosis, schizophrenia, and heart disease. Health officials estimate that as many as 47,000 cancer deaths could be prevented each year in America if adequate vitamin D levels were attained. But sun scare messengers and health “experts” irresponsibly urge us to wear lotions and cosmetics with added SPF, which can block up to 100 percent of our vitamin D production.

Vitamin D deficiency is contributing to hundreds of thousands of cases of chronic and terminal diseases. That means the sunlight myths perpetuated by the skin care industry aren't only misleading. They're deadly.

We need sunlight like we need water, food, and a roof over our head.

It would be false prudence to completely avoid the sun in order to prevent skin cancer. Yes, too much UV light is unhealthy. However, too much of any good thing can be bad for your health. And too much [UV avoidance] can be downright dangerous.

When it comes to sunlight, the old adage holds true: Everything in moderation.

Dr. Michael Holick is the director of the vitamin D, skin, and bone research laboratory at Boston University Medical Center. He researches the effects of UV light for the UV Foundation, www.uvfoundation.org

The MILFORD DAILY NEWS

Milford, MA

February 20, 2008

Holick: Why We Need To Spend More Time In The Sun

Life on our planet requires sunlight to survive. And most organisms work hard to get it. Jungle reptiles often compete with each other to find the highest, warmest surfaces for sunbathing. Rain-forest plants race to fill rare, sunny openings in the thick canopy left by fallen trees. And some flowers even bend their stems to follow the sun's movement across the sky.

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Michael Holick, M.D., is the director of the vitamin D, skin, and bonereseearchlaboratoryat Boston University Medical Center. He authored "The UV Advantage." This piece first appeared in the Providence Journal.

*Also ran in: The Daily News in Waltham, MA and
The MetroWest Daily News in Framingham, MA*

The Free Lance-Star

Fredricksburg, VA

February 24, 2008

Go Ahead, Get Some Sun; It'll Do A Body Good

BOSTON—Life on our planet requires sunlight to survive. And most organisms work hard to get it. Jungle reptiles often compete with each other to find the highest, warmest surfaces for sunbathing. Rainforest plants race to fill rare, sunny openings in the thick canopy left by fallen trees. And some flowers even bend their stems to follow the sun's movement across the sky.

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Michael Holick, M.D., is director of the vitamin D, skin, and bone research laboratory at Boston University Medical Center.

The Eagle-Tribune

North Andover, MA

February 21, 2008

We need to spend more time in the sun

Life on our planet requires sunlight to survive. And most organisms work hard to get it. Jungle reptiles often compete with each other to find the highest, warmest surfaces for sunbathing. Rain-forest plants race to fill rare, sunny openings in the thick canopy left by fallen trees. And some flowers even bend their stems to follow the sun's movement across the sky.

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Chicago, IL

February 21, 2008

Vitamin D and Your Heart

Lack of the so-called Sunshine Vitamin may not just affect your bones, it could be hazardous to the heart.

It's estimated that one third to one half of otherwise healthy adults are low in Vitamin D. Couple that with this winter's lack of sunshine, and levels for Midwesterners could be dipping even lower. Not only does Vitamin D help keeps bones healthy, but folks with too little of this vitamin could be facing up to twice the risk of heart attack or stroke.

Vitamin D seems to be the new buzzword of the millennium. It's causing controversy and creating confusion because most of us get our Vitamin D from the sun. Scientists have said too much sun exposure is bad for you, but now we're being told maybe we've gone too far — and, possibly, are not getting enough.

A new wave of research is showing Vitamin D may reduce risk from several major illnesses, including cancer, diabetes and now heart disease.

"I was dumbfounded cause this was not in our radar that we should be checking this," said Dr. Annabelle Volgman, cardiologist, Rush Univ. Med. Ctr.

Rush cardiologist Annabelle Volgman started to check her female patients for Vitamin D deficiency. She was shocked to learn the majority were lacking. Baumgart, 31, who

works at Rush, is one of them.

"She tested my blood and I was severely Vitamin D deficient," said Baumgart.

Doctors don't know if that played a role, but Angela's heart was skipping beats. She says a pacemaker made a big difference in her health. She later added a Vitamin D rich diet — along with supplements.

"My activity has gone up I do feel better," said Baumgart.

Josie Lempa, who was also measuring on the low side, is also taking prescription Vitamin D.

"I haven't taken anything other than the D, and it really has made a difference."

A recent study in the journal "Circulation" may be the strongest evidence yet linking Vitamin D to cardiovascular disease. It found that events such as heart attacks, strokes and heart failure were anywhere from 53 to 80 percent higher in people with low levels of vitamin d in their blood. That risk increased even more in people with high blood pressure.

"This article in Circulation just made it a great mark in my suspicion that we should be checking Vitamin D deficiency in all of our cardiac patients," said Baumgart. "I have been telling a lot of physicians about this and I'm not sure they have accepted it yet."

Vitamin D is best known as one

of the most important regulators of calcium absorption in the body. It can be found in dairy products, fatty fish such as salmon and eggs.

So why would it help the heart? Researchers speculate that more of this vitamin could lead to less inflammation in the arteries. It has also been linked to reduced blood pressure. But, don't be too quick to rush out and stock up on Vitamin D supplements.

"We don't yet know if taking them really makes a difference in term of heart disease," said Dr. Rupa Meh-ta, cardiologist, Univ. Of Chicago Med. Ctr.

There's the catch. University of Chicago Cardiologist Rupa Meta says we still know so little about the relationship between Vitamin D and the heart. Does lack of the vitamin cause the problems or does cardiovascular disease essentially lead to Vitamin D deficiency? Also, other vitamins in the past such as "C" and "E" have shown promise in preventing heart problems- only to eventually fizzle out.

"I would not recommend routine testing as of yet because we don't have enough data," said Dr. Mehta.

What most doctors agree on is that an over the counter multi vitamin that contains vitamin d is a good idea for the average person. And if you have questions ask your doctor what they recommend.

Exposing the Benefits of Ultraviolet Light

Make no bones about it—getting enough vitamin D is key to maintaining healthy bones and can help to prevent other health problems.

Unfortunately, a Harvard Medical School study published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* has reported that 60 percent of Americans are vitamin D deficient.

This is particularly troublesome since vitamin D is proven to ward off many types of cancer including colon, prostate and breast cancer and is further shown to guard against heart disease, MS and other chronic health problems.

Experts say that moderate exposure to sunlight or UV light is thought to be the best way to help the body manufacture the vitamin D it needs.

However, during the bleak winter months it becomes harder to get the necessary amount of vitamin D. In fact, getting the requisite amount in cities north of 37 degrees latitude for as many as six months out of the year can be a real challenge. That includes cities such as Richmond, Va., St. Louis, Mo., and Sacramento, Calif., and all cities farther north.

While it is true that too much exposure to

UV (ultraviolet) light may lead to various health problems, extreme avoidance of UV light can be dangerous as well.

When it comes to sunlight, the old adage holds true: Everything in moderation.

“More and more science is emerging every day confirming the enormous health benefits of vitamin D and the significant health consequences of not getting enough of it,” said Tim Miller, Communications Director for the UV Foundation.

For those concerned about vitamin D deficiency and who find it difficult to get the necessary amount of sunlight, there are other ways to get your dose of the “sunshine vitamin.”

Vitamin D supplements, moderate exposure to UV light from a tanning bed, and a diet rich in vitamin D fortified foods will all help fight against vitamin D deficiency.

However, experts agree that the easiest and best way to get the requisite amount of vitamin D is through sunlight and UV light. Founded in 2004, the UV Foundation is dedicated to funding research to explore the effects of ultraviolet light on the human body.

For more information, visit TrustTanning.com.

NutritionData

know what you eat

February 19, 2008

Winter Warning: Your Vitamin D Levels May Be At Their Lowest Right Now

Unless you are lucky enough to live in a location that enjoys year-round sunshine and mild temperatures, you are likely to experience a drop in your Vitamin D levels during the winter. Getting direct sun on your skin is one of the chief ways in which you get vitamin D. With the colder weather, we spend less time outdoors and when we are outdoors, we try to cover as much skin as possible.

But even in a mild winter, the northern half of the country simply doesn't receive enough UV to power sufficient skin production of the vitamin. As a result, your vitamin D levels are probably at their lowest toward the end of the cold weather season. Some experts are concerned that the increased use of high-powered sunscreens threatens to make vitamin D deficiency a year-round phenomenon. In fact, a recent Harvard Study found that 60% of Americans may be vitamin D deficient.

Low vitamin D levels are serious business, not only do you need vitamin D to keep your bones strong but it also plays an important role in your immune defenses against winter colds and flus, and can help prevent cancer, heart disease, and auto-immune diseases. According to the UV Foundation, low vitamin D levels can also lead to fatigue, depression, and aches and pains.

Fortunately, there are other ways to get your vitamin D. There aren't a whole lot of foods that are naturally rich in vitamin D. (Mackerel, sardines, and fish liver oil are among the top providers.) Because our diet does not contain a lot of vitamin D-rich foods, the government also mandates fortification of milk and baby formula with vitamin D. Other dairy products, like yogurt or cottage cheese may or may not contain additional vitamin D. Vitamin fortified cereals can be another good source, and the nutrient can also be taken as a dietary supplement.

However you choose to take your vitamin D, just be sure you're getting enough on a regular basis. The current recommendations for vitamin D intake is 200IU per day for adults up to 50, 400IU a day for those between 51-70, and 600IU a day for those over 70. (Vitamin D deficiency is epidemic among the elderly). And there is a major movement afoot in the scientific community to get the government to raise—even double—those recommendations.

A cup of fortified cow or soymilk contains about 100IU. Three ounces of canned pink salmon contains about 600 IU. Here's a list of other foods high in vitamin D, generated with our Nutrient Search Tool.

24-Hour Dorman

February 27, 2008

Got Rickets?

Health experts are warning sun-starved Iowans about the dangers of vitamin D deficiency, according to Radio Iowa:

“While the cold winter weather may put you in a bad mood and keep you indoors, one group says it can also have an adverse health impact. Tim Miller is a spokesman for the U.V. Foundation and says many people in Iowa and other Midwestern states aren’t getting enough sunlight.

“Miller says that results in vitamin D deficiency, which he says can lead to increased risk for colon, prostate and breast cancer, M.S. and an increase in children reporting rickets. Miller says there are a lot of remedies including supplements and tanning beds. He says the recommended level of vitamin D is one-thousand units per day.

“He says you can look on the side of the supplement bottle to see how much that is. One serving of salmon has 900 units, so that would cover a day. One glass of milk is 400 units, and five to seven minutes twice a week in a tanning bed would cover the need.”

My wife, our two children and our dog, Clover, stumbled out into the sunlight on Sunday morning, squinting at the giant, magical orb as we trudged around north Marion, where sidewalk clearing is, evidently, optional. For us, it was a last-ditch effort to stave off madness, but it turns out we also avoided a nasty case of rickets. Bonus.

Scurvy was already covered, thanks to the limes in my gin and tonic. And if there’s some disease cured by loudly swearing at falling snow, I’m also immune to that. Very immune.

Lab Law Weekly

February 24, 2008

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includes cities like Richmond, VA, St. Louis, MO, and Sacramento, CA, and all cities farther north.

For those concerned about vitamin D deficiency and who find it difficult to get the necessary amount of sunlight, there are other ways to get your dose of the “sunshine vitamin.” Vitamin D supplements, moderate exposure to UV light from a tanning bed, and a diet rich in Vitamin D fortified foods will all help fight against vitamin D deficiency. However, experts agree that the easiest and best way to get the requisite amount of vitamin D is through sunlight and UV light.

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Health Business Week

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BIOTECH LAW WEEKLY

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Biotech Obesity, Fitness, & Wellness MAGAZINE

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LAW & HEALTH WEEKLY

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HEALTHCARE MERGERS, ACQUISITIONS, & VENTURES MAGAZINE

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Cardiovascular Device Liability Weekly

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HEART DISEASE W E E K L Y

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LAB BUSINESS WEEK

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Oncology Business Week

February 23, 2008

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Pharma Investments

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Women's Health Weekly

February 18, 2008

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