



ADVANCED BODY DYNAMICS

Wellness Care & Sports Medicine

THE SUNSHINE VITAMIN – VITAMIN D BENEFITS HEALTH AND CANCER SURVIVAL

The full benefits of Vitamin D may just be coming to light. This “sunshine vitamin” seems to go a long way toward promoting good health and has benefits as well for people fighting the ravages of cancer.

Vitamin D has recently been touted for enhancing health and warding off major health problems. These include providing help in the prevention of heart disease, cancer and hypertension. Additionally, it is known to help in the production of strong bones which reduces the risk of osteoporosis and bone fractures. In fact, its anti-inflammatory properties might also protect against many other diseases and immune disorders.

The recommended daily doses for Vitamin D have been established for some time and are now being looked at for possible increase. Daily recommendations are now set at 200 International Units (IU) per day for persons under the age of 50; 400 IU for those 50 to 70 and 600 IU for those over 70.

Recently, the American Medical Association (AMA) got into the action with a policy statement at the organization’s annual meeting held in Chicago. According to the AMA, the organization would like the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to re-examine the current daily intake value of Vitamin D based on new scientific finds about its benefits. “The health benefits of Vitamin D are plentiful, such as strong bones and a reduced risk of breast cancer and cardiovascular disease,” said AMA Board Member Steven Stack, M.D. “It’s time to take a good look at the current daily recommended level of Vitamin D and ensure that Americans know the appropriate levels so they can reap the full health benefits.”

In a case where a person does contract cancer, having higher levels of Vitamin D present may bode well for their future survival. A study recently conducted at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute of Harvard University showed that in persons who did contract colon cancer, those with greater Vitamin D levels had a much higher chance of survival than those with lower Vitamin D amounts.

For this study, researchers identified 304 colon cancer victims from between 1991 and 2002. Each had provided a blood sample at least 2 years before they became ill with colon cancer. The group was divided into four quartiles. The highest Vitamin D levels were assigned to the top 25 percent and the lowest levels to the bottom quartile. During the time of the study until 2005, 123 of the patients died, 96 of them dying from the cancer.

Researchers found that those in the highest quartile were 48 percent less likely to succumb to colon cancer than those in the lowest group of Vitamin D levels. “Our data suggests that the higher pre-diagnosis plasma levels of Vitamin D after a diagnosis of colorectal cancer may significantly improve overall survival,” the authors of the study said. “Future trials should examine the role of Vitamin D supplementation in patients with colorectal cancer.”

It looks like a lot more is going to be said and written about the healthful and healing qualities of Vitamin D in the near future and there is a very good chance the daily recommended levels may go higher.

Sources: Harvard Medical School, the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. “Study Links Vitamin D to Colon Cancer Survival.” June 2008. <http://www.dana-farber.org/abo/news/press/2008/study-links-vitamin-d-to-colon-cancer-survival.html> and The American Medical Association. “AMA Adopts New Public Health Policies at Annual Meeting.” June 2008. <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/18696.html>

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