

**THE NATUROPATHIC  
PERSPECTIVE  
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## VITAMIN D FOR HEALTH

Last month the *Journal of Steroid Biochemistry and Molecular Biology* brought vitamin D back into the spotlight when it published results of two studies which indicate that raising vitamin D levels in humans may prevent up to half of all breast and two thirds of colorectal cancer cases in the United States. And you thought it was just needed for your bones...

### **Vitamin D in your body:**

- maintains normal blood levels of calcium and phosphorous
- aids absorption of calcium from your foods
- promotes bone mineralization
- protective against some cancers; particularly breast, prostate, colon and skin
- supports insulin sensitivity
- required for fetal bone and teeth formation during pregnancy
- linked to healthy infant birth weight

### **Deficiencies have been shown to cause:**

- bone loss... osteoporosis... hip fracture
- arthritis      ◦ infertility      ◦ fatigue      ◦ depression
- seasonal affective disorder (SAD)      ◦ autoimmune disorders; including multiple sclerosis

### **Vitamin D sources:**

- sunshine on your skin 20minutes daily
  - Nov-Feb: anytime      ◦ summer: before 11am, after 3pm      ◦ summer mid-day: 10minutes max.
- cod liver oil supplement: during winter, and summer if wearing sunscreen daily
  - quality is important for avoiding heavy metal contamination      ◦ brands I trust: Nordic Naturals, Carlson's
- fatty cold ocean fish
- artificial UVB tanning lights: 10minutes yields ~2,000-4,000IU
  - not advised for pale skin or skin that does not tan well
- fortified foods

### **Challenges for acquiring adequate Vitamin D:**

- daily use of sunscreen with SPF greater than 8
- minimal skin exposure to sun during winter months
- use of steroids; potential for impairment of vitamin D metabolism
- inflammatory bowel disease (ie. Crohn's) can lead to compromised absorption
- advancing age: decreased photoproduction in skin and reduced absorption in digestive tract
- compromised kidney &/or liver function: proper conversion of vitamin D produced in your skin depends on the health of these organs

In light of the recent studies, the investigators recommend a daily adult intake of 2000 IU of vitamin D and, when possible, moderate sun exposure.

**Important to note:** Vitamin D is fat-soluble and gets stored in your body tissues; therefore it is highly advised to have your blood levels checked prior to beginning generous supplementation.

Ask your naturopathic or medical doctor about testing for vitamin D; 25-hydroxycholecalciferol (25(OH)D). Most people living outside the tropical regions do not have blood 25(OH)D levels high enough for optimal health!

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