



The Natural Way to a Healthy & Energetic Life

News Flash # 4: July 2010

Summer has arrived in many countries – An appropriate time to discuss Vitamin D

Well known as the "sunshine vitamin," vitamin D is actually a pro-hormone. Ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun which is crucial for synthesis of vitamin D in the skin, which is then modified in the liver and kidney to yield a hormone needed throughout the body.

Vitamin D is essential for bone health, and emerging data shows that low vitamin D levels place individuals at higher risk for, amongst others, several cancers, including breast, colon, prostate and ovarian; diabetes; multiple sclerosis, age-related decline in physical performance and may reduce the risk of developing Parkinson's disease. Low vitamin D levels may also play a role in depression and psoriasis.

Avoidance of UV exposure has contributed to an epidemic of low vitamin D levels. This does not mean that you should bare the entire body for hours in hot sunshine for even the face can produce a good quantity of vitamin D.

Vitamin D can be obtained through a diet of fatty fish, cod liver oil, fortified milk, and fortified cereals.

In the summer, most people will have higher levels due to intentional or unintentional sun exposure. People living in the northeastern United States are at higher risk for vitamin D deficiency due to lack of sunshine for much of the year. Darker skinned individuals are at higher risk for deficiency due to higher melanin levels in the skin that block UV absorption.

People with the lowest serum vitamin D levels are three times more likely to develop Parkinson's disease, compared to those with the highest levels.

Strength and physical performance have been found to be directly related to vitamin D levels.

Are there those who may need more than others? Yes. Those who are at high risk for vitamin D deficiency include those

- with disorders of the pancreas, digestive system or liver.
- age 50 plus (The ability to produce vitamin D from sun exposure decreases with age).
- with darker skin (Melanin, the pigment that colors skin, reduces the body's production of vitamin D)
- who spend much of their life indoors, away from the sun, or live where sunlight is often obscured by clouds or pollution.
- Vegetarians or lactose-intolerant people who do not consume vitamin D-fortified foods or supplements.

In one study, the Institute of Medicine concluded that more than half of American women don't consume the recommended amount of vitamin D. In a recent issue of the journal Diabetes Care, researchers in Italy reported that nearly three out of every five people with type 2 diabetes show signs of vitamin D deficiency.

Currently the maximum considered as safe is 2,000 IU a day. When accounting for total vitamin D intake, keep in mind that multivitamins, calcium tablets, milk, and cereals are often fortified with vitamin D.

Is it best to get Vitamin D from the Sun? Most authorities agree that whole body exposure (wearing only a bathing suit) without sunscreen, for 15 minutes, about three times a week, is sufficient. Of course, for those who have had or are at higher risk for skin cancer, supplementation is a safer way to raise vitamin D.

Posture and Headaches

Workstation Adjustments and Exercises Help Correct Postures

Your desk setup may be the cause of headaches or neck pain. Check below for some tips on workstation adjustments and the link will direct you to more information and various illustrated Seated Upper Body stretches with full instructions. www.tinyurl.com/2aw5nvn

A forward head slant and a rounded shoulder posture can overload the ligaments and joints, and

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give way to neck pain and headaches. If you have reason to continually rub the back of your neck and shoulder, or if you suffer from regular headaches that are not related to any other medical issue, a few workstation adjustments and some stretching disciplines may be all that you need.

Check if you are prone to these common causes:

- Ensure that the top of the monitor screen is at eye level. You may need to lower the monitor if you wear bi-focal glasses. If you have to tilt your head backward to view the screen it needs to be lowered.
- Control screen glare by using a glare guard, or adjust the window blinds, or change the workstation setup to accommodate your lighting needs.
- Use an adjustable document holder that is placed in front or beside the monitor and at eye level.
- Adjust your chair height so that your shoulders are down and hands touch the home row of the keyboard comfortably.
- Ensure that you have plenty of legroom and that your feet rest comfortably on the floor. If you need to raise the chair to accommodate the desk height, get a foot rest to place in front of your chair.
- Both desk and floor lamps can do a lot in the way of illuminating the workstation.
- Avoid cradling the telephone in to your neck.
- Alternate your work tasks and functions throughout the day. Don't sit for long hours without standing, walking or stretching.
- Keep the computer's mouse close to the body. Do not chase the mouse with full arm extension.

Additional Resources:

These suggestions are intended for use as a resource to reduce your ergonomic and musculoskeletal disorder risks at work and at home. However, if you experience prolonged or severe signs and symptoms of a musculoskeletal disorder you may require a comprehensive ergonomic evaluation and/or medical evaluation or assistance. www.tinyurl.com/2aw5nvb

Summer (for many), Travel and Back Pain

The longer days and warmer weather invites us to get away; but for many the car or air travel, coupled with activities that we have not done all year, can play havoc with our backs—even if you don't have a history of pain.

Enjoy the holiday of your choice by first taking a trip through the notes below.

Car Trips

Car travel is back in fashion for many obvious reasons. This means possible longer sitting hours and more pressure on your back. Fortunately, there are ways to alleviate the strain long car rides can place on your lower back:

- Make sure you have some support in the lower back. Whether it be a cushion or a rolled up towel, the positive effect on your seated posture is critical. www.tinyurl.com/2a7qqj2
- Place a sheet of Cotton Wool under you shirt / top across the lower back to absorb the sweat and protect you from the effects of the air-conditioner or open window hitting that area.
- Regular breaks for a walk-around or stretch is important. Even spending just a few minutes doing some general stretches (print them out) will make the journey and holiday much more enjoyable. www.tinyurl.com/2aw5nvb.
- Remove such items such as wallets, keys or similar from back pockets.
- Pack a cooler bag with ice packs. Applying ice packs can often help to relieve any twinges that may occur. Don't apply directly on the skin and do so for no longer than 7 –8 minutes.

Air Travel

A majority of people reported that they had back or neck pain—or both—after their flight.

Try to follow the guidelines below:

- Request a seat with maximum leg room or aisle seat.
- Focusing on your posture is essential. Make use of the cushions provided and even request extras if needed. Keep both feet on the floor and sit upright.
- When lifting or pulling or pushing, ask for assistance if needed.
- Take precautions and remember, handling of luggage is not something that you are accustomed to doing. So play safe.

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