

Epidemic of Vitamin D Deficiency

Excerpted and summarized by Delisa Renideo

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We hear of flu epidemics and the obesity epidemic, but a vitamin D deficiency epidemic?

According to Dr. Joel Fuhrman, (drfuhrman.com), approximately 50 percent of Americans have dangerously low vitamin D levels, below 20 ng/ml. Ideally, we should have levels between 35 and 50 ng/ml, but almost 80 percent of Americans fall below 35 ng/ml. That's even higher than the two-thirds of Americans that are overweight!

Instead of specific symptoms to look for, vitamin D deficiency contributes to the major chronic diseases. It results in increased heart disease, cancer, musculoskeletal disease, including osteoporosis, and autoimmune disease, such as lupus. It even contributes to depression. It actually seems to make all diseases worse, and contributes to a shorter life.

Dr. Fuhrman makes the point most clearly when he says, "Deficiency of vitamin D is as severe a disease risk as smoking cigarettes, so it is imperative that you do everything necessary to maintain normal vitamin D levels."

We make vitamin D in our skin when it is exposed to sunlight, so we ought to just go out and enjoy the sun, right? Unfortu-



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nately, there are problems with this. First, most Americans work indoors at northern latitudes and don't get enough sun to make adequate vitamin D. Secondly, in order to get enough sun to make adequate vitamin D, we would be putting our skin at risk for premature aging and skin cancer. The atmosphere isn't what it used to be. We have damaged the ozone layer with pollution, so now the sun damages us more than it would otherwise. Supplemental vitamin D has been shown to be very effective in preventing and reversing diseases caused by vitamin D deficiency without any of the negative affects of too much sun exposure.

So how much vitamin D should we take? Previous recommendations of 400 units of vitamin D have proven to be inadequate for most people to achieve optimal blood levels of Vitamin D. Dr. Fuhrman recommends doses of 1000 - 2000 units per day. Some researchers are recommending higher doses, but excess Vitamin D is also dangerous.

The best way to know if we have healthy levels of vitamin D is to have a test called the 25-hydroxyvitamin D blood test, (25-OH). The results are described in nanograms per milliliter (ng/ml) or nanomoles per liter (nmol/L). The optimal range, when