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In this issue

Life Extension Update Exclusive

Vitamin D supplements reduce falls in older adults

Health Concern

Osteoporosis

Featured Products

Vitamin D Capsules

Bone Restore

Life Extension

Overstock Sale on now!

Life Extension Update Exclusive

Vitamin D supplements reduce falls in older adults

A report published in the February, 2007 issue of the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* concluded that supplementing with vitamin D can help prevent nursing home falls in older men and women. Falls occur in approximately half of the residents of nursing homes each year, and render the patients more susceptible to further injury.

Kerry Broe and Douglas Kiel of the Institute for Aging Research at Hebrew SeniorLife in Boston and colleagues at Boston Medical Center and Harvard analyzed data from a randomized, controlled clinical trial of 124 nursing home residents with an average age of 89. Participants received 200, 400, 600, or 800 international units (IU) vitamin D per day or placebo for five months.

At the study's conclusion, 44 percent of the patients in the placebo group had fallen, compared with 20 percent of the group that received 800 IU vitamin D. The adjusted-incidence rate ratio of falls of the subjects in this group was 72 percent lower than that of the placebo group. Lower doses of vitamin D than 800 IU were not associated with any significant effects compared to placebo.

Over half of the subjects who were using a multivitamin supplement at the beginning of the study had suboptimal serum vitamin D levels of less than 20 nanograms per milliliter. When total vitamin D supplement intake was calculated to include multinutrient supplements, the group whose intake was in the lowest one-fifth of the participants had the greatest number of fallers, while the top fifth had the least.

"Past studies have shown that vitamin D could help prevent falls in seniors, and may be due to a possible strengthening effect the vitamin has on the musculoskeletal system," the authors noted. "Until now, we didn't know what dosage amount would be effective."

They add that vitamin D supplementation should be considered in combination with other methods to help reduce falling, and recommend further research.

"Lowering the risk of falls with a simple vitamin D supplement could improve the quality of life for nursing home residents by reducing the incidence of falls," they conclude.

Health Concern

Osteoporosis

Calcium and vitamin D are the cornerstone of osteoporosis prevention, yet they are not the whole story. Other minerals and

nutrients that are vital to a healthy bone matrix include magnesium, potassium, vitamin C, vitamin K, vitamin B12, and others, including zinc, manganese, boron, copper, and silicon (Nieves JW 2005; Hirota T et al 2005).

Vitamin D, a hormone-like substance, promotes the absorption of calcium. Vitamin D is made by the skin after exposure to sunlight or ultraviolet radiation, and vitamin D deficiency is widespread throughout the United States. People with light skin make more vitamin D than others. Hence, vitamin D levels of light-skinned people may be much lower than other people's in the winter. Some people must avoid exposure to sunlight for various reasons, such as incompatibility of sunlight with certain medications. Recent studies have suggested that the recommended US RDA for vitamin D (600 IU daily) is actually too low and that people would benefit from 800 to 1000 IU and more daily (Nieves JW 2005).

In addition, exercise is highly recommended. Weight-bearing exercise has been shown to reduce the rate of bone loss among postmenopausal women, although it does not seem to increase bone mass (Kasper DL et al 2005). Also, exercise promotes healthy joints, ligaments, and muscles, which make falling less likely.

http://www.lef.org/protocols/metabolic_health/osteoporosis_01.htm

Featured Products

Vitamin D Capsules

Vitamin D is necessary for utilization of calcium and phosphorus and in many ways acts as a hormone. The two most important forms of vitamin D are cholecalciferol (D3), which is derived from our own cholesterol and ergocalciferol (D2), a plant analogue derived from the diet. The cholecalciferol supplied by the Life Extension Buyers Club is synthetic, but its form is identical to that which is derived from cholesterol and synthesized by sunlight on the skin. Cholecalciferol Vitamin D is essential for bone growth and maintenance of bone density.

<http://www.lef.org/newshop/items/item00251.html>



Bone Restore

A problem overlooked by most doctors is that loss of bone density is associated with deficiencies of not just calcium, but a host of other nutrients including magnesium and vitamin D3. In order for calcium to prevent bone loss, adequate amounts of vitamin D3, zinc, manganese and other nutrients should be available so that calcium, magnesium, and phosphorus can be incorporated into the bone matrix. Another issue that many people are not aware of is that many forms of calcium do not absorb particularly well.

<http://www.lef.org/newshop/items/item00811.html>



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<http://www.lef.org/os2>

If you have questions or comments concerning this issue or past issues of Life Extension Update, send them to

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