

VELMA B. COX FOUNDATION

For Type II Diabetes and High Blood Pressure



VITAMIN D: DIABETES, COVID & RACIAL DISPARITIES

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When most people think of vitamin D, they usually think of its importance to bone health or to maintaining a positive mood. In reality, the “sunshine vitamin” is actually more of a hormone than a vitamin. It is believed that all cells and tissues in the body have vitamin D receptors. Vitamin D plays many roles in the body, including immune support, gene expression, brain health, cancer prevention, thyroid function, lung and cardiovascular health, as well as bone health.

Many people do not realize that vitamin D also plays a crucial role in improving the body’s sensitivity to insulin. It helps to regulate appetite as well as reduce belly fat - two important factors when it comes to preventing type 2 diabetes.

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We get most of our vitamin D from exposure to the sun. Our skin makes vitamin D from UV rays. However, getting enough vitamin D can be a challenge depending on one's distance from the equator, use of sun screen, indoor lifestyle, weight, age and skin color. In much of the United States it is very difficult to get sufficient vitamin D, especially during the fall and winter months. As a result, many foods such as milk are fortified with an inferior type of vitamin D - D2. While this is helpful, the fact remains that worldwide it is estimated that over a billion people are deficient in vitamin D.

In the United States, there appears to be a wide disparity of vitamin D levels between White and Black populations with 28% of Whites and 81% of Blacks estimated to be vitamin D deficient. In regard to bone health, the implications are not as clear cut due to evidence that darker pigmentation may improve calcium absorption and metabolism within the body. However, when it comes to the many non-bone health related benefits of vitamin D, it is believed that being vitamin D deficient may have serious health implications, including an increased risk of type 2 diabetes. And as we have learned during the pandemic, being diabetic puts one at a higher risk of contracting COVID. Vitamin D is known to be lung protective. It is worth mentioning that when the president got COVID, vitamin D supplementation was part of his protocol.

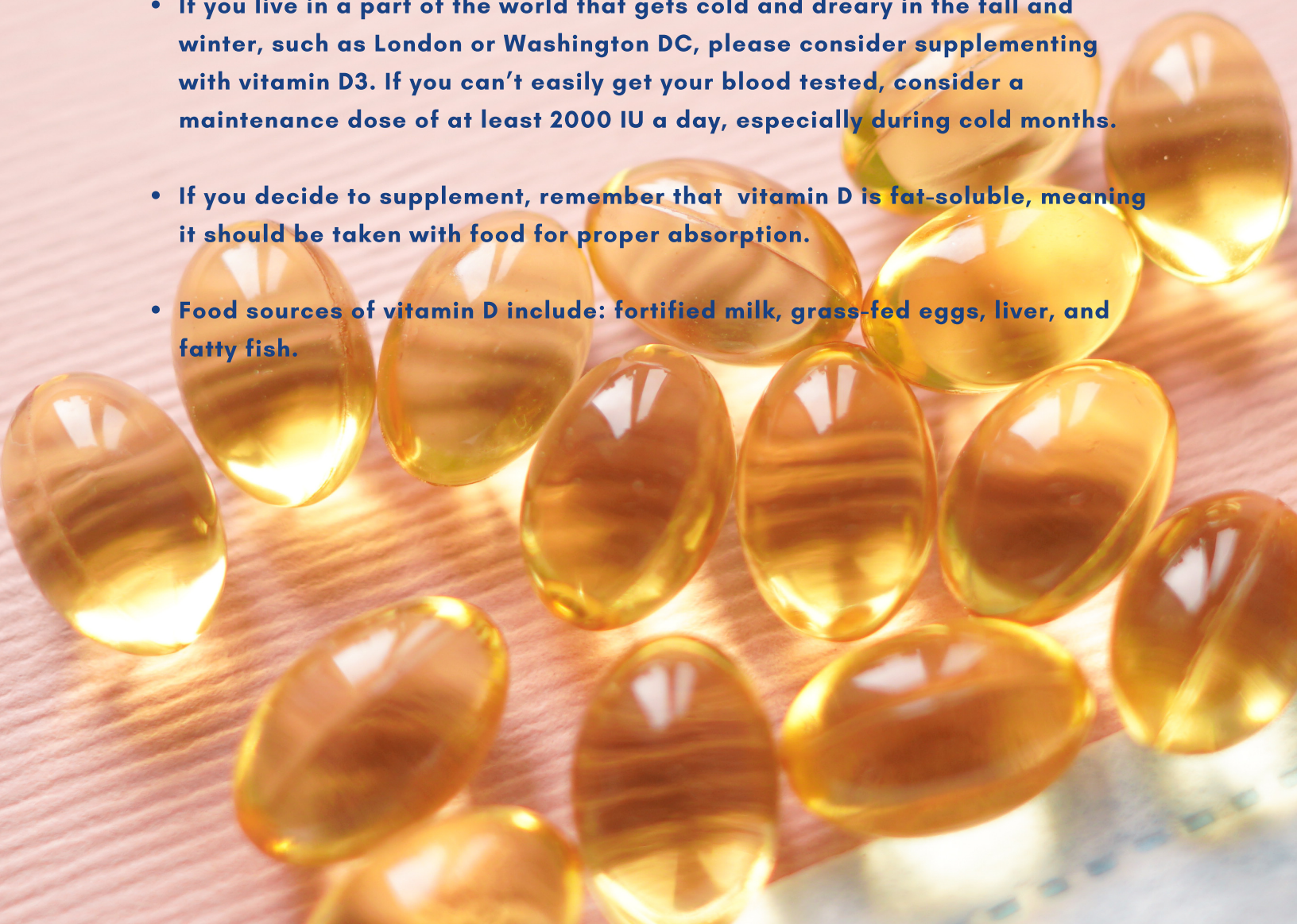


-How do we know if we need more vitamin D?-

For starters, it helps to know your level. Most doctors consider 30ng/mL to be sufficient. Levels between 20-29 are considered insufficient; and below 20 is considered deficient. As an aside, many nutritionists and naturopathic doctors prefer to see levels considerably higher than 30 in order to achieve an optimal range, depending on the needs of the individual. In any case, levels should not exceed 100.

Recommendations:

- If you live in a warm climate, try to get at least 15-20 minutes of sun exposure a day without sunscreen.
- If you live in a part of the world that gets cold and dreary in the fall and winter, such as London or Washington DC, please consider supplementing with vitamin D3. If you can't easily get your blood tested, consider a maintenance dose of at least 2000 IU a day, especially during cold months.
- If you decide to supplement, remember that vitamin D is fat-soluble, meaning it should be taken with food for proper absorption.
- Food sources of vitamin D include: fortified milk, grass-fed eggs, liver, and fatty fish.



In conclusion, vitamin D is needed to help prevent type 2 diabetes. Many populations most at risk for diabetes are known to have low vitamin D levels. Fixing this problem should be a priority. Fortunately, vitamin D3 supplementation is relatively inexpensive. Lastly, having adequate vitamin D levels may be protective against COVID.

References:

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