



## **When More D's Are Great for Your Teen**

It appears that most teens are getting a failing grade when it comes to serum levels of vitamin D. In fact, a recent study by researchers in the Department of Public Health at Weill Cornell Medical College found that one in seven American adolescents is vitamin D deficient. Even more surprising is further research at Children's Hospital Boston showing that one in five teenage boys and one in four teenage girls don't get enough vitamin D. And for kids who have hereditarily darker skin, risks are even greater that they aren't getting enough vitamin D. The sun's ultraviolet radiation needs to reach the deeper layers of skin to build vitamin D – and darker skin pigment can prevent this process.

So what is the downside for teens with a vitamin D deficiency? Weaker bones and higher body fat, a tremendous increase in the risk of diabetes and heart disease, and even an impact on athletic performance are just a few of the more critical issues. To learn more about your teen and vitamin D, visit our website .... (web site here.)

Most people know that vitamin D helps the body absorb and use calcium. The mineral calcium provides strength to bones and teeth, and helps improve nerve and muscle functioning. Since the teenage years are the most important for bone growth and development, calcium and vitamin D together help prevent rickets or "soft bones", osteomalacia, or osteoporosis (decreased bone mass).

Proper muscle strength is now directly related to vitamin D. According to the findings presented in the Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism (JCE&M) last month, young teen girls who have normal levels of vitamin D show an increase in muscle power, force, velocity and jump height. More surprising, many girls had low D levels at the beginning of the study without visible symptoms. And for girls trying to lose weight – vitamin D can make a big difference. Another study (JCE&M) done at USC and McGill U. revealed that females aged 16-22 had more difficulty losing weight when they had low vitamin D levels yet reduced their daily calorie intake by 700 calories.

Helping your teen improve their vitamin D score through a healthy diet and proper sun exposure is the best approach. Getting outside about 30 minutes three times a week without sun block – and eating the right foods will



increase vitamin D serum levels safely. Drinking at least four glasses of fortified milk daily meets the minimum nutritional requirements.

For kids who are lactose sensitive, fortified orange juice or soy milk are great choices. Foods rich in vitamin D include eggs, salmon, tuna, shrimp, and fortified cereals. If your teenager's diet is lacking and the winter weather is keeping kids indoors, supplements are a great addition. Keep in mind, however, that because vitamin D is fat soluble, excessive vitamin D intake through supplements can be harmful, so monitor your teen's intake and have blood levels tested by your family physician. The maximum recommended amount of vitamin D a teen should take is 50 mcg or 2000 IU, with a minimum of 10 mcg or 400 IU.

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