The Connection Between Vitamin D and Osteoporosis

by YVONNE BANKS

The Link Between Vitamin D and Osteoporosis

Vitamin D doesn't get much attention in our media like calcium or Vitamin C. However, this vitamin is very important for our bones. If it weren't for vitamin D, much of the calcium you consume would not get absorbed. The lack of this important nutrient could lead to osteoporosis and other bone maladies. It is an essential part of developing healthy bones in your body.

Are You At Risk?

You may be at risk for a vitamin D deficiency and not even know it. There are some people who are more susceptible than others. Below are risk factors to be aware of:

- Being homebound
- Spending too little time in the sun
- Covering up when outdoors
- Dark-skinned people (don't absorb vitamin D well)
- People who are obese
- Living in an institution where you are not outside much
- Elderly people with certain risk factors
- Having a medical condition such as irritable bowel syndrome or celiac disease
- Certain medications that prevent vitamin D from absorbing, such as, anti-seizure medications

Vitamin D and Osteoporosis

There is a strong correlation between vitamin D and osteoporosis when it comes to preventing falls or fractures. Most people get their intake of this essential vitamin through sunlight. The skin produces vitamin D from the sunlight for our body to use. Many people live where they don't get out much during the day during the winter. Because of the fact they stay indoors, they don't get the chance to be exposed to the sun. It produces lower levels of vitamin D in their blood, and they become more susceptible to fractures during this time.

Other benefits vitamin D offers are stronger muscles and better leg function. For the elderly, this fact is important for fall prevention. It is easier to catch your fall when you have stronger leg muscles than it is when you are weak. Your stability will encourage steady gait, so falls don't happen in the first place.

Where Can I Find Vitamin D?

There are only a few ways to get your supply of vitamin D: sunlight, food, and supplements.

If you cannot get your vitamin D from sunlight, you will need to supplement your diet. If you have noticed, milk is fortified with vitamin D. Drink plenty of milk and other foods that contain it, such as:

- Cod Liver Oil
- Oily Fish
- Mushrooms
- Pork
- Dairy Products
- Eggs

When You Need a Supplement

A supplement should contain about 400 IU if you want to ensure you are getting enough. If you want to know how much you really need and you love to calculate, you will need to figure out how much you are getting in your diet. You will then subtract that sum from the recommended daily amount for your age. This total will leave you with what you need to supplement your diet with.