

VITAMIN D

UNDERSTANDING THE BENEFITS OF VITAMIN D



VITAMIN D LEVELS

Many research studies have confirmed the importance of adequate Vitamin D to help attain optimal health. When Vitamin D is at a good level almost all organ systems of the body function better and are less likely to have problems, particularly the brain, bone, breast, and immune systems.

VITAMIN D: FROM THE SUN

We like to help our patients keep their Vitamin D in an above normal range. The best source for Vitamin D is the sun, but here in Idaho it is hard to get enough sun (ultraviolet B rays) because of our latitude. There are only 3 months of the year (the summer months) when Vitamin D is easier to absorb. Lying out in the sun for 30 minutes a day without sunscreen will help increase Vitamin D levels, but only during those 3 months. Always remember that there is always a balance in the amount of sun exposure; maintaining this balance ensures receiving the benefits, but not the risks of too much sun.

As I have checked Vitamin D levels in my patients, they are nearly always low and even sometimes extremely low. Normal blood levels should be between 50-80 ng/ml. I have found that using a weekly prescription dose of 50,000 IU of Vitamin D (a small capsule) is the best way to reach these adequate levels.

Over the counter Vitamin D is also fine, but would need to be taken in 5-6 tablets a day or about 3,000-5,000 IU daily.

Higher levels of Vitamin D will potentially improve your health by boosting immunity, combating fatigue, lowering risk for cancers, and promoting better bone, breast, and brain health. Vitamin D also is the key to calcium absorption, so increasing your Vitamin D levels will increase your calcium absorption. Getting too much calcium can cause damage to the kidneys, so if you are taking extra calcium you may need to adjust your intake, since better Vitamin D levels will help you absorb the calcium in the foods you eat.

MAINTAINING NORMAL VITAMIN D LEVELS

I encourage a yearly blood level of Vitamin D to ensure that those levels of 50-80 ng/ml are maintained. Normally the prescription dose of 50,000 IU is sufficient, but on occasion some patients require a dose 2-3x a week.

GUIDELINES

1. Have a baseline Vitamin D blood level drawn, along with calcium.
2. Start your weekly 50,000 IU capsule, which will be prescribed to your pharmacy of choice, or take 3,000-5,000 IU daily.
3. Come in for a follow up blood level at least 8-12 weeks after taking your Vitamin D. This test is already in your computer chart and all you have to do is come in when we are open, no appointment is necessary.
4. Continue taking your Vitamin D all year long. We will contact you regarding your results and if the frequency of dosing needs to be adjusted based on your first level and the follow up level, then we will let you know what may be best for you.
5. Have your levels checked once a year on your yearly/annual exam.