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Vitamin D reduces the risk of certain cancers

A study published in the American Journal of Public Health has found that vitamin D deficiency may account for several thousand premature deaths annually.

The researchers reviewed 63 studies (from 1966 to 2004) that examined the worldwide relationship between vitamin D and certain types of cancer. The majority of studies found a protective relationship between sufficient vitamin D status and lower risk of cancer, especially in cancers of the colon, breast, prostate, and ovary.

Vitamin D is acquired through either the diet or exposure to sunlight. Food sources include milk, yogurt, cheese, and fortified orange juice. A typical serving provides approximately 100 international units (IU). Researchers suggested that people might want to consider a vitamin supplement to raise their overall intake to 1,000 IUs per day. Supplementing with additional vitamin D could be especially important for people living in northern areas, where shorter days and longer nights result in less vitamin D from sunlight.

The evidence suggests that improving vitamin D status through diet and supplements could reduce cancer incidence and mortality with few or no adverse effects and very low cost.

American Journal of Public Health. Feb 2006. 96(2):252-61.

Additional recently published studies show vitamin D exerts anti-cancer benefits for both men and women in regards to breast, prostate, and lung cancer.

Vitamin D intake and breast cancer risk in postmenopausal women: the Iowa Women's Health Study

Cancer Causes Control. Sep 2007. 18(7):775-82. Epub 2007 Jun 5.

Protective role of 1, 25-dihydroxyvitamin D3 against oxidative stress in nonmalignant human prostate epithelial cells

International Journal of Cancer. Jun 2008. 122(12):2699-706.

Vitamin D receptor expression in normal, premalignant, and malignant human lung tissue

Cancer Epidemiol Biomarkers Prev. May 2008. 17(5):1104-10.