



Health Hint article by David Coory

David Coory is the author of the nutrition book "Stay Healthy by Supplying What's Lacking in Your Diet" and Executive Director of Zealand Publishing House and Health House.

Vitamin D – a powerful hormone for optimum health

The warmth of the sun on our skin is one of life's little pleasures. But we are brainwashed into believing that staying out of the sun is necessary to avoid cancer. The exact opposite may be true. We must avoid sunburn, but generally we can safely spend up to several hours in the sun most summer days, without sun block (SPF15 blocks 99% of Vitamin D formation) depending on our skin type and tan level. When you start to get slightly pink, you've reached the limit of safe Vitamin D formation, but don't wash for two hours to allow the Vitamin D to be absorbed from the oils in the skin.

When optimum levels of Vitamin D and calcium are found together, the risk of cancer drops. Ironically, much research nowadays is indicating that moderate sun exposure actually protects against melanoma.

The recommended daily intake (RDI) of Vitamin D in NZ ranges from 40iu for a child, to 1200iu for an over 70 year old. (Aged skin hinders the formation of Vitamin D.) Researchers now say this is far too low for optimum health and suggest 2000 to 5000iu a day. Toxicity level is now regarded as 4000iu a day for children and 10,000iu a day for adults.

Vitamin D researcher Professor Garland says, "... literally millions are dying from Vitamin D deficiency."

Health benefits of Vitamin D

Optimal levels of Vitamin D can provide the following health benefits; ideally obtained from the sun, but also from Cod Liver Oil, or a supplement containing natural Vitamin D3 (Cholecalciferol).

- ▶ Strong healthy bones and teeth
- ▶ Prevention (up to 80%) of various cancers, especially prostate, breast, colon and lung
- ▶ Reduced risk of Type 2 diabetes

- ▶ Prevention of rheumatoid arthritis and MS
- ▶ Less depression, PMS and more optimism
- ▶ Lower blood pressure and reduced risk of heart disease and strokes (average 55%)
- ▶ Better balance, strength and flexibility in the elderly
- ▶ Prevention of asthma and other allergies
- ▶ More effective immune system
- ▶ Enhanced athletic performance
- ▶ Healthy kidney function
- ▶ Healthier pregnancies
- ▶ Boosts male testosterone (average 59%)

Blood testing for optimum level of Vitamin D (80–120nmol/L)

You can obtain a Vitamin D blood test from most doctors or medical centres. Healthy levels are 40 -120 nmol/L, with 80 nmol/L being an accepted ideal. Many NZ'ers drop to 16 nmol/L in the winter months. Some labs may tell you your Vitamin D level is normal if you are over 20 nmol/L. It may be 'normal' as far as the deficient average person is concerned, but for optimum health your levels should be between 80 nmol/L and 120nmol/L. Above 120 nmol/L can be a sign of Vitamin D toxicity. (USA uses the ng/ml measurement, 1 ng/ml = 2.56 nmol/L).

Mediterranean health superiority may not be their diet

An Italian study showed that healthy Rome blood donors had excellent Vitamin D levels of 120 nmol/L during their summer. Most Italians love the sun. An old Italian proverb states: "Where the sun does not go, the doctor does."