Introduction to Vitamin D

Besides the disease that I just mentioned, overall mortality is impacted by vitamin D levels as well. A study that came out last year from our friend, the UK Biobank, noted that people in the lowest quartile of vitamin D serum levels had around a 25 % increase in mortality compared to people with normal levels. This is Dr. Talks.

Hello and welcome. Today we're going to talk about the sunshine vitamin, vitamin D, and how important it is for our overall health. Most of us are probably familiar with the concept that vitamin D is important for our bones and the avoidance of osteoporosis and therefore fractures. But I'm going to tell you today that it's way more important than that.

Vitamin D and Major Health Risks

It's important in very many different body organs and deficiencies of vitamin D can cause many, different kinds of health problems, including dementia. So I'm going to be quoting from a couple of new studies and some of this material is quite well established and is older material. During the COVID epidemic, you may recall that vitamin D levels were found to be associated with a risk of being in the ICU. In other words, People in the ICU had oftentimes very low vitamin D levels. And infection risk is one of the things that seems to be associated with low vitamin D levels in our bloodstream.

Diseases that are associated with vitamin D deficiency are cancer of the lung, colon, and breast, cardiovascular disease, and autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis. And lastly, more recently, established is dementia. When I was doing research for this topic, I kept coming across the concept that vitamin D deficiency is a public health problem or emergency or pandemic. Those were the words that I encountered.

Who Is at Risk for Deficiency

It's very, very widespread throughout the world, not just in the northern latitudes where most of my listeners are from. but certainly northern and southern latitudes have less sunlight exposure, which is one of the major sources of vitamin D around the world. It's estimated that around 15 % of, it was measured that only 70, one of the studies quoted that only 15 % of individuals over age 75 had enough vitamin D in their serum blood level. This may be due to decreased absorption as we get older. with pigmented skin make less vitamin D when they are exposed to the sun.

There are some medications that may reduce our absorption of vitamin D or even our manufacturing of vitamin D in our skin. Vitamin D is present in some food stuffs, particularly in animal products and it is supplemented in some food stuffs as well such as cereals and breads, but the levels are pretty low and it's inadequate for most people to reach their serum level with only dietary sources. Most of us need supplementation.

Vitamin D, Mortality, and Dementia Research

Besides the disease entities that I just mentioned, overall mortality is impacted by vitamin D levels as well. A study that came out last year from our friend, the UK Biobank, noted that people in the lowest quartile of vitamin D serum levels had around a 25 % increase in mortality compared to people with normal levels. And these were older individuals who had been followed for around 10 years on average. More recently, there was a study of more than 12,000 people from the US in the US National Alzheimer's Coordinating Center with a mean age of 71 years. These folks at the onset of the study had no memory problems or dementia, and they were followed for an average of 10 years. Around 37 % of them were taking vitamin D supplements. The people who were taking the supplements had about a 40 % reduction in their risk. of becoming demented over the 10-year follow-up. And this impact was more notable for the female participants in particular. So that to me is compelling evidence right there. Another recent study was presented at the American Heart Association's 2023 scientific sessions reported on how it was often difficult to get serum levels with the levels of supplements that are supposedly what is nominally

required. Many people, even at 2000 international units, were not properly reaching their serum levels. And some people actually needed 10,000 international units. So again, what I'm trying to convince you to do is to get tested and be retested once you start supplementation. If you're one of the 85 % of the older people who will probably need supplementation.

Testing, Supplementation, and Closing Remarks

So I hope this is something that will work out for you and it's in the interest of present preventing so many of these critical illnesses and overall mortality. If you've had your own experience with trying to get your serum level into a good range, let us know in the comments below or anything else you would like to know about vitamin D or anything you would like to comment. If this kind of information is useful for you and if you enjoyed this video, please like and subscribe. It's great to have you with me and I hope to see you again soon. you. Thank you for tuning into Dr. Talks. We hope today's episode has enlightened and inspired you on your path to optimal health. Each day is a new opportunity to make choices that empower your wellbeing. For more insights and strategies, subscribe to our podcast and visit our website, www. DrTalks.com. Stay connected, stay healthy, and join us next time on Dr. Talks, real talks from real doctors on the issues that matter to you most.