

health awareness



CTSI

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BENEFITS OF VITAMIN D

Often referred to as the sunshine vitamin, vitamin D is a steroid hormone produced by cholesterol when the skin is exposed to ultraviolet B (UVB) rays from the sun. Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium, and lack of adequate vitamin D levels is associated with several bone diseases such as rickets in children and osteomalacia, a condition where bones become soft and deformed, in adults.

Vitamin D also plays a vital role in the body's immune response, and studies have found that it lowers the odds of developing respiratory infections, like the cold or flu. Current and ongoing studies, such as this yet-to-be peer-reviewed study conducted at

Northwestern University (<https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.04.08.20058578v4>), are trying to determine if vitamin D may provide some protection against COVID-19.

Benefits of Vitamin D

While research into the possible protective effects of Vitamin D against COVID-19 is ongoing, other benefits of the vitamin have been well studied. Research on the impact of vitamin D suggests that it may prevent certain cancers, especially when taken with calcium. Other studies indicate that it may impact cognitive health, with one small study showing that it improved cognitive function in adults over 60 being treated for dementia.

Vitamin D Deficiency

An estimated 41.6 percent of Americans have a vitamin D deficiency. Minorities face even higher rates of vitamin D deficiency at 82.1% for blacks and 69.2% for Hispanics because darker skin blocks more of the UVB rays needed to spur vitamin D production. The recommended daily amount for vitamin D is 400 international units (IU) for infants under 12 months, 600 IU for children and adults, and 800 IU for adults over 70 and pregnant women.

Vitamin D levels are measured by a blood test for calcifediol, the term used for vitamin D stored in the body. Levels below 12 nanograms per milliliter (ng/ml)

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are considered deficient. A level above 20 ng/ml is considered adequate; however, many experts think blood levels higher than 30 ng/ml best for health and disease prevention. Some medical experts believe that the recommended dietary allowance is too low and should be higher for optimal health (<https://doi.org/10.3390/nu6104472>); however, it is possible to take too much vitamin D. Blood levels over 50 ng/ml can lead to excess calcium in the body and may damage the kidneys.

Sources of Vitamin D

Vitamin D is fat-soluble, which means it dissolves in fats and oils,

so your body can store it. There are two primary forms of vitamin D. Vitamin D3 (cholecalciferol), which is found in foods like fatty fish (e.g., salmon, tuna, etc.) and egg yolks, and vitamin D2 (ergocalciferol), which is found in plants, mushrooms, and yeasts. Vitamin D3 is more effective at raising vitamin D levels in the blood.

Since the 1930s, the United States and other countries have fortified some foods with vitamin D to improve public health. Most kinds of milk and some cereals are fortified with vitamin D. This had led to a decrease in rickets in children.

However, breastfed babies and babies with dark skin are still at risk of developing nutritional rickets and should be supplemented with vitamin D (<https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/breastfeeding-special-circumstances/diet-and-micronutrients/vitamin-d.html>).

Vitamin D plays an important role in overall health and may protect against respiratory infections. Many Americans would benefit from increasing their vitamin D levels; however, excess vitamin D can cause health problems. Consult your doctor to determine if you would benefit from vitamin D supplementation. 

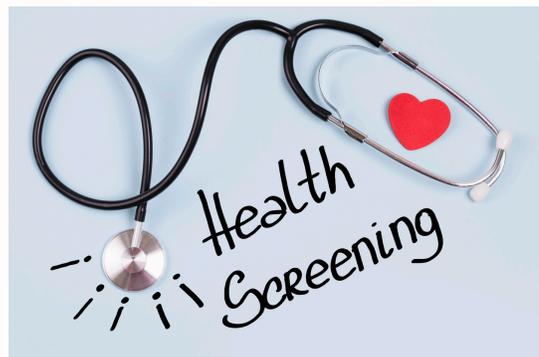
Benefits Corner

Preventive Screenings & Care

Because of the current pandemic, many health fairs have been canceled or postponed. While health fairs offer a great opportunity to receive preventive health screenings, CHP members can receive preventative health care from participating plan providers, usually without paying a deductible, copayment, or coinsurance. Screenings and other services are considered and covered as preventive care for adults and children, even if the patient has no current symptoms or prior history of a medical condition associated with that screening or service. That means that we pay participating providers 100% of the maximum allowed amount.

To determine which preventive services are covered, the U.S. Preventive Service Task Force (USPSTF) has developed recommendations based on scientific data. The USPSTF gives services it recommends as highly beneficial or highly-to-moderately beneficial an A or B grade. Examples of these services include:

- Breast cancer screenings
- Cervical cancer screenings
- Colorectal cancer screenings
- High Blood Pressure tests
- Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus tests
- Cholesterol tests
- Child and Adult Obesity screenings



As always CTSI staff is here to assist you with your health, dental, vision, or life insurance coverage. You can reach us at 303 861 0507.