

Vital Vitamin D

As well as its vital role in bone health – you will not absorb enough calcium for strong bones without it – vitamin D has just been found to protect women against vaginal infections. After analysing thousands of my patient's diets over the years, there were hardly any people who were getting even half of their daily needs. I, along with many experts believe that the advised intake for this vital vitamin is far too low anyway.

Vitamin D deficiency may play a vital role in osteopenia, a forerunner of osteoporosis, muscle weakness, fractures, some types of cancers, autoimmune diseases, infectious diseases as well as heart and circulatory diseases. The latest research shows another surprising side effect of missing out of this essential nutrient; low vitamin D levels may increase the risk of bacterial vaginosis, a common infection of the vagina which can put pregnancies at risk.

In a study with 469 women participating in a pregnancy cohort study, Lisa Bodnar from the University of Pittsburgh, USA, studied nearly 500 pregnant women. She found those with below normal vitamin D had a 34 per cent increase in bacterial vaginosis compared to women with healthy vitamin D levels. This protective effect may be due to the vitamin's strong influence on the immune system.

Bacterial vaginosis is a very common vaginal infection, affecting around 30 per cent of women between 14 and the menopause. Usually treated with antibiotics, probiotics may prevent the condition. Eating live yoghurt and applying some to the vagina has long been the preferred treatment for natural health practitioners. There is also evidence that higher intakes may reduce the incidence of several types of cancer and type-1 diabetes.

We manufacture vitamin D when the skin is exposed to sunshine, but in some northern countries it's so weak during the winter that we can't make any. Now, with all the scares about sun and skin cancer, many people use such high factor sun protection products that they make little, even in summer. Vitamin D rich foods like oily fish are essential; but for many, supplements may be the surest way to boost intakes of vitamin D.

A Nation Deficient

Nearly a third of Brits are deficient in vitamin D, due to a combination of grey weather, lack of skin exposure to the sun, overuse of sun screens, more time spent indoors and diets low in fresh foods containing vitamin D such as liver, red meat, oily fish and mushrooms.

These Research findings are from "The interfaces between vitamin D, sleep and pain" *Journal of Endocrinology*, 24 May 2017.

This new study shows Vitamin D3 is key. The body's need for the well-known 'sunshine vitamin' vitamin D has been extensively researched and documented. And now new research¹ confirms that vitamin D3 is actually better absorbed and utilised in the body than vitamin D2.

Vitamin D3 is also produced in the skin in the presence of sunlight, hence its name the 'sunshine vitamin'. Researchers from the University of Surrey followed 335 South Asian and

white European women over two consecutive winters and found that eating foods containing vitamin D3 was twice as effective at raising blood levels of this important vitamin as foods containing vitamin D2.

One of the reasons for this is that Vitamin D3 is turned into its most active form within the liver. Vitamin D is essential for human health and helps to build healthy bones and teeth, specifically reducing the risk of rickets in children, and osteoporosis in older people. However, it does not work in isolation.

Vitamin D's principal role is in supporting levels of the mineral calcium within the body, and these two nutrients are inseparable. Studies show that in combination adequate vitamin D increases absorption of calcium by 30-40% compared to only 10-15% absorption without sufficient vitamin D.

Ahead of publication in *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, Lead author Dr Laura Tripkovic recognised the importance and synergistic nature of these two nutrients and food supplement manufacturer Nature's Way offers a unique product suitable for both adults and children from 3 years; Alive! Calcium Soft Jells.

Made with only natural strawberry fruit flavours, these chewable Soft Jells contain 25 micrograms of vitamin D3 and 500 milligrams of calcium per adult daily dose. They also contain 230 milligrams of phosphorus, another key bone and teeth building mineral.

Clinical Nutritionist, Suzie Sawyer, comments: "The body's absolute need for adequate vitamin D is unequivocal with a very large percentage of the UK population being seriously deficient, partly due to lack of sunlight and low dietary intake. With Public Health England now recommending vitamin D supplementation for the entire population during the winter months, and for some individuals all year-round, the importance of this vitamin is finally being acknowledged.

Nature's Way has created a well-balanced 'go-to' product to ensure that any dietary gaps or deficiencies are quickly plugged". Mike Wakeman, a pharmacist with a Master's in Pharmaceutical Analysis, Nutritional Medicine and Clinical Oncology, adds: "Long-term calcium and vitamin D supplementation reduces the risk of hip fractures in the population as discovered in the Women's Health Initiative trial,

However, it is generally acknowledged that many people find it hard sticking to a daily supplement regime, hence the need for a more appealing supplement format such as a fruity, chewable Soft Jell. Whilst many supplements contain the vitamin D2 form, Alive! Calcium Soft Jells provide Vegetarian-Society approved vitamin D3, ensuring the product is suitable for vegetarians and is ideal for the whole family from aged three years. The delicious strawberry flavour, together with its easy-to-take Soft Jell format, makes this a unique product within the marketplace.

Alive! Calcium Soft Jells are part of the Alive! range of Soft Jell multi-vitamins and minerals, which are free from gluten, soya, yeast, dairy, artificial flavours, colours and preservatives and contain only natural fruit flavours. They also contain a unique dried blend of 26 fruits and vegetables providing an additional top-up to the daily diet. Alive! Calcium Soft Jells are available in Holland & Barrett and Boots both instore and online.

For more information on the Alive! range please visit:
Website: www.feelaliveuk.com

NEW National research undertaken by Alive! multi-vitamins and minerals has revealed that British women are only starting to think about their mortality from their late 30s onwards.

Osteoporosis, for example, is considered an 'older person's' disease. But when you realise that peak bone density is reached around age 25 you start to understand how important it is to take care of your body earlier than you might think.

It is also important to understand that eating disorders, excessive exercise, being too thin – BMI less than 18 – early hysterectomy or ovary removal and even long term use of some prescribed medication can all reduce your calcium absorption.

Lack of exercise, yo-yo dieting and fizzy drinks, including diet drinks, can also deplete bone density. So, whether you're 25 or 55, taking steps to protect your bone health now is so important for the future. Osteoporosis is a common condition affecting around three million people in the UK today. Bones stop growing between the ages of 16 and 18 and continue to increase in density until the mid-20s. Losing bone density is a normal part of the ageing process, but for some people it can lead to osteoporosis and an increased risk of bone fractures and breaks.

99% of the calcium in your body is stored in your teeth and bones, but that is not all as calcium also helps the heart, brain, nerves, and muscles, and helps blood to clot.

New research reveals vitamin D supplements can help people with chronic backache and arthritis and other pain related conditions such as menstrual cramps and fibromyalgia.

Dr Monica Levy Andersen from the Federal University of Sao Paulo led the study and says of the findings 'we can hypothesise that suitable vitamin D supplementation combined with sleep hygiene (good sleeping habits) may optimise the therapeutic management of pain related diseases.' This could help explain why people tend to report more aches and pains in the winter months.

Researchers believe that vitamin D works for autoimmune diseases by interfering with processes that make us sensitive to pain, thus raising our pain threshold.

