

One Vitamin Prevents Heart Disease?

Vitamin D does a heart good. Very, very good. In people who had low levels of vitamin D, often called the sunshine vitamin, extra vitamin D significantly lowered their risk of developing heart disease, as well as type 2 diabetes, according to a study from the Intermountain Medical Center Heart Institute in Murray, Utah.

Health Day News reports that vitamin D replacement therapy has long been linked to lowering the risk of fractures and diseases of the bone; now it appears to help the heart, too. How much is enough? Vitamin D levels of 43 nanograms per milliliter of blood or higher will lower the risk of type 2 diabetes, heart attack, heart failure, high blood pressure and heart disease, as well as lower the overall risk of death. A level of 30 nanograms per milliliter of vitamin D is considered normal.

Lead study author Dr. J. Brent Muhlestein recommends people increase their vitamin D intake by 1,000 to 5,000 international units daily. But before doing that, see your physician for a blood test to determine your current vitamin D level and get a recommendation on how much vitamin D supplement you should take. This isn't the first study to reach the same conclusion.

Led by Dr. Keith Norris, a team from Drew University School of Medicine in Los Angeles, California evaluated the blood levels of vitamin D and the risk of heart disease in 7,186 men and 7,902 women using data from the Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES III) that was conducted between 1988 and 1994. They found that women, older people, racial and ethnic minorities, obese people and those suffering from hypertension or type 2 diabetes had the lowest levels of vitamin D. When these people were compared with those who had the highest vitamin D levels, the researchers realized that those with the lowest levels were far more likely to have high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and obesity--all risk factors for cardiovascular disease.