

Vitamin D Deficiency Linked To Heart Disease and Death, Study Finds

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Vitamin D deficiency has been linked to heart disease and death, but the risk is more than halved when they are given supplements, according to a large new study.

Analyzing data on more than 10,000 patients, University of Kansas researchers found that 70 per cent were deficient in vitamin D and they were at significantly higher risk for a variety of heart diseases.

The deficiency also nearly doubled a person's likelihood of dying, but correcting the deficiency with supplements lowered their risk of death by 60 per cent.

Dr. James L. Vacek, a professor of cardiology at the University of Kansas Hospital and Medical Center, told Reuters Health the findings were "so much more profound than we expected."

"We expected to see that there was a relationship between heart disease and vitamin D deficiency; we were surprised at how strong it was," Vacek said.

Vitamin D deficiency has been linked to numerous illnesses, but few studies have demonstrated that supplements could prevent those outcomes.

Vacek and his team reviewed data from 10,899 adults whose vitamin D serum levels had been tested at the University of Kansas Hospital.

They found that more than 70 per cent of the patients were below 30 nanograms per milliliter, the level many experts consider sufficient for good health.

After accounting for the patients' medical history, medications and other factors, the cardiologists found that people with deficient levels of vitamin D were more than twice as likely to have diabetes.

The same group were 40 per cent more likely to have high blood pressure and about 30 per cent more likely to suffer from cardiomyopathy -- a diseased heart muscle -- as people without the deficiency.

Overall, those who were deficient in D had a three-fold higher likelihood of dying from any cause than those who weren't deficient, the researchers said, Reuters reports.

The study does not prove that vitamin D is the cause of the effects seen, as other factors,

like disease, could be responsible.

However, the latest National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey estimated that 25 per cent to 57 per cent of adults have insufficient levels of D.

Vacek said he believes so many people are deficient because we should get about 90 per cent of our vitamin D from the sun and only about 10 per cent from our food, Reuters reports.

He said sufficient vitamin D absorption from the sun would require at least 20 minutes of full-body exposure each day in warmer seasons, and most people aren't outside long enough.

Vacek advises adults to get their vitamin D levels checked through a simple blood test, and take vitamin D supplements, Reuters reports.

The study was published November 7th in the American Journal of Cardiology:
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22071212>

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