

# Health Awareness

## Vitamin D And Bone Health

(NAPSA)—Newly issued recommendations on vitamin D can help physicians more effectively address the bone health concerns of older Americans. According to research conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, over 70 percent of women ages 50-70 and nearly 90 percent of women over 70 do not get an adequate amount of vitamin D through food and supplements. The new set of recommendations was provided by a panel of experts convened by the American Medical Women's Association (AMWA) in response to widespread vitamin D deficiency and to help generate greater understanding of the role of vitamin D in bone health.


According to the first ever *Bone Health and Osteoporosis: A Report of the Surgeon General (2004)*, vitamin D, along with calcium and exercise, is a key element to maintaining bone health. Vitamin D helps ensure that the body absorbs and retains calcium, which is critical for building strong, healthy bones. Vitamin D deficiency has often been linked directly to osteoporosis, a debilitating bone disease that affects 10 million Americans and is estimated to impact one in two Americans over 50 by 2020.

"We agreed that there is a need for increased awareness of the role of vitamin D in osteoporosis treatment," said Felicia Cosman, MD,

clinical director of the National Osteoporosis Foundation and associate professor of clinical medicine at Columbia University School of Medicine, and chair of the expert panel. "These recommendations will serve to call attention to the prevalence of vitamin D deficiency and ensure that patients, particularly women and men over 50, receive optimal care."

In the recommendations, the panel expressed concern that current recommended guidelines on vitamin D do not provide for opti-

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mal bone health and called for an increase in daily vitamin D intake from 400 international units (IU) in adults over 50 to 800-1000 IU. In addition to the data that found 70 to 90 percent of postmenopausal women are vitamin D deficient, an additional study found that over half of postmenopausal women already receiving medicines used to treat osteoporosis have inadequate levels of vitamin D, further underscoring the need

for revised treatment guidelines.

The panel also recommended that supplements be used as the primary source of vitamin D for most individuals. Although over 90 percent of vitamin D can be obtained through sun exposure, the panel agreed that this is becoming increasingly difficult as a result of the widespread use of sunscreen and protective clothing, due to concerns about skin cancer and other skin diseases, aging and geographic limitations. Vitamin D is also found in a limited number of foods, such as fatty fish, and in certain fortified foods. However, many of these foods are not part of most people's diets or must be consumed in large volumes to meet the requirement, making supplements the realistic choice of vitamin D intake for many older Americans.

The experts stated that the recommendations should serve as a guide for treating patients and are sufficient for most. However, they emphasized that vitamin D deficiency should ultimately be treated on a patient-by-patient basis, and encouraged patients to speak with their physician to determine how much vitamin D is right for their bone health needs.

To find out more about the recommendations and vitamin D's role in bone health, talk to your physician or visit [www.amwa-doc.org](http://www.amwa-doc.org) to view/download an online patient brochure.