

VITAMIN D CAN REDUCE CANCER RISK

(CNN) -- A large daily dose of vitamin D can dramatically lower the risk of developing common cancers, including breast, ovarian and colon cancers, by up to 50 percent, according to American researchers.

The research, published in the American Journal of Public Health, reviewed 63 studies looking at the relationship between blood levels of vitamin D and cancer risk. It found that the "natural" form of the vitamin, known as D3, could dramatically reduce the chances of developing common cancers.

The study concluded that taking 1,000 international units (IU) -- or 25 micrograms -- of the vitamin daily could lower an individual's cancer risk by as much as 50 percent.

However, such large doses of the vitamin must be treated with caution. More than 2,000 IU a day can lead to the body absorbing too much calcium, and possible damage to the liver and kidneys.

D3 is normally produced in the skin by being exposed to sunlight, but can also be obtained from certain foods. Dietary sources are limited -- a glass of milk, for instance, contains only 100 IU of the vitamin.

Vitamin D deficiency may account for several thousand premature deaths from cancer each year in the United States, said the scientists.

Professor Cedric Garland, from the University of California at San Diego, who led the review study, said: "A preponderance of evidence, from the best observational studies the medical world has to offer, gathered over 25 years, has led to the conclusion that public health action is needed," he said.

"The easiest and most reliable way of getting the appropriate amount is from food and a daily supplement."

The study found that people in the north eastern U.S., and darker skinned individuals, were at increased risk due to a lack of sunshine-generated vitamin D.

A leading British cancer charity was cautious about the claims, with a spokeswoman claiming the evidence linking vitamin D levels with cancer risk was "complex and confusing."

"There is evidence to suggest that the vitamin plays a role in keeping cells healthy," said Sara Hiom, head of health information at Cancer Research UK, "she told Britain's Press

Association. "But further research is needed to understand what role vitamin D may play in preventing cancer in humans."

Source: <http://www.cnn.com/2005/HEALTH/12/28/vitamin.cancer.study/index.html>