

Article

Research: many more options with vitamin D

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As you know, the EFSA (European Food Safety Authority) determines which health claims may be made about food supplements. For example, for vitamin D there are health claims in respect of calcium absorption, blood, bones, muscles, the teeth, the immune system and cell division. Below are three studies - only the tip of the iceberg - that show that much more is possible with vitamin D.

Vitamin D reduces the number of fall-related fractures in the elderly

A large-scale vitamin D supplementation programme has saved New Zealand's government more than half a million New Zealand dollars (GBP 285.000) over the past two years.

Since 2010 health professionals have encouraged the prescription of vitamin D to elderly residents of care homes. This resulted in a rise in the percentage of elderly people taking vitamin D between 2010 and 2012 from 15 to 74 percent.

The aim of the programme was to reduce the number of fall-related fractures in the elderly. This seems to have been successful. "Since the programme started, 32 percent fewer elderly people attended A&E with fall-related fractures", said Associate Minister Jo Goodhew. "Plus the number of hospital admissions due to these fractures fell by 41 percent."

Scientific research had already shown that vitamin D supplementation can reduce the number of fall incidents and fall-related fractures. The programme confirms that this approach also led to good

results in actual practice.

The savings mainly result from reducing the number of hospital admissions. The savings will probably be greater still, because less clinical support and medication is required and the costs incurred for rehabilitation will be lower.

"It is difficult to overrate the advantage of fall prevention in the elderly. Fall prevention ensures that the elderly can maintain their independence and self-reliance", said Mrs Goodhew.

Vitamin D improves glycaemic control in type 2 diabetes

According to researchers at the Errikos Dunant Red Cross Hospital in Greece, vitamin D deficiency has been found to be linked to the development of type 2 diabetes and metabolic syndrome.

The researchers studied the connection between the blood serum level of 25-hydroxy-vitamin D3 [25(OH)D3] and glycaemic control. Glycaemic control maintains blood sugar levels in the body within a safe range. Attempts are often made to correct this with medication, but side effects then often occur, including anaemia, weight gain, urogenital problems and hypoglycaemia.

The levels of glycosylated haemoglobin (HbA1c) - an indicator of the blood sugar level over the past few weeks- and 25(OH)D3, were monitored in a group of 120 patients with type 2 diabetes. The same levels were monitored in an equally sized control group of the same age and gender. The 25(OH)D3 level was lower in the patients with type 2 diabetes than in the control group. In these patients, the 25(OH)D3 level was inversely proportional to the HbA1c level.

“Cautious vitamin D supplementation can improve the glycaemic control in type 2 diabetes and therefore change the way in which we treat this disease”, the researchers concluded. One huge advantage is that this type of therapy has few to no side effects.

Vitamin D offers a solution for sleep disorders

Researchers at the East Texas Medical Centre and the University of North Carolina have discovered that vitamin D helps to regulate the sleep-wake rhythm; they have proven a connection between a vitamin D deficiency and sleep disorders.

The REM sleep (Rapid Eye Movement) is one of the deepest levels of sleep. Good REM sleep is linked to a good memory and learning capacity. In insomnia, the REM sleep is interrupted, or this is not present at all. Other sleep disorders include sleep apnoea, where the breathing is interrupted, sleeplessness due to hormone fluctuations, restless legs and periodic limb movement disorder of the legs and arms during sleep.

A clinical study was performed involving 1500 patients with various sleep disorders who were monitored for 2 years. For many months of the study, the vitamin D3 level was kept consistent. This resulted in a normal sleeping pattern in the majority of people, irrespective of the type of sleep disorder, which indicates that many different types of sleeplessness have the same underlying cause. The researchers discovered that there were high concentrations

of vitamin D receptors in the areas of the brain involved with falling to sleep and remaining asleep.

The researchers noticed that sleep disorders play a role in the development of disorders, such as high blood pressure, heart disease, cerebral haemorrhage, diabetes, depression and chronic pain - all diseases that are just as widespread as insomnia. “These therapeutic effects give rise to further research and considering the use of vitamin D therapy in the treatment of sleep disorders”.

If you would also like to be kept fully informed about the latest natural treatment methods for your therapeutic practice, why not attend one of the courses or training programmes at the Natura Foundation!

Sources

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3. Gominak SC, Stumpf WE, The world epidemic of sleep disorders is linked to vitamin D deficiency, Medical Hypotheses 2012 Aug;79(2):132-5.