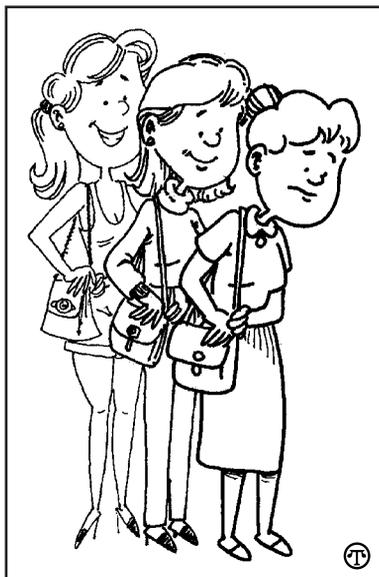


One 'D' That Women Need: Vitamin D Is Critical For Bone Health

(NAPSA)—If you are being treated for osteoporosis, you probably think you're getting enough vitamin D. Think again! According to new research, more than 50 percent of women currently treated for low bone mass (i.e., osteopenia) or osteoporosis have less than adequate levels of vitamin D. New research presented at a recent major medical meeting showed that even though physicians routinely recommend that women treated for low bone mass or osteoporosis take over-the-counter (OTC) supplements, these women frequently still have inadequate levels of vitamin D.

This is important news for the more than 10 million people in the United States estimated as having osteoporosis—80 percent of which are women. The National Osteoporosis Foundation advises that getting the recommended daily amounts of vitamin D and calcium is one of the five steps involved in bone health and osteoporosis prevention.

"While women may know that calcium is an important part of optimal bone health, the research shows many women who suffer from low bone mass or osteoporosis either are unaware of the important role vitamin D plays, or are simply not getting adequate amounts as part of their treatment regimen," said Ethel Siris, MD, lead investigator and director of the Toni Stabile Center for Prevention and Treatment of Osteoporosis at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in New York City. "Getting enough vitamin D, whether through supplements, proper food choices or appropriate and careful exposure to sunlight,



Osteoporosis can lead to bone fragility and increased susceptibility to fractures.

is vital to managing osteoporosis."

The study examined more than 1,500 postmenopausal women—averaging 71 years of age—from 61 sites in North America between November 2003 and March 2004. It was designed to measure vitamin D levels in postmenopausal women currently receiving medication to prevent or treat osteoporosis. The study showed that prevalence of vitamin D inadequacy was significantly higher in women who took less than 400 international units (IU) of vitamin D supplementation daily compared with those who took at least 400 IU or more daily.

Surprisingly, study results showed that nearly half of the women were not getting enough vitamin D, despite 66 percent self-reporting that they had spoken

with their physician about the importance of taking vitamin D for bone health.

Vitamin D, also known as the "sunshine vitamin" because it is manufactured in the skin after direct exposure to sunlight, is an essential component of osteoporosis therapy that helps the body absorb and retain calcium and phosphorus, both critical for bone building. Vitamin D allows calcium to move from the intestine and enter the bloodstream. It also works in the kidneys to help resorb calcium that otherwise would be excreted.

Vitamin D can be found naturally in a small number of foods, such as egg yolks, liver, oysters, oily fish (e.g., mackerel, salmon), and in fortified dairy products, breads and cereals. Exposure to sunlight or consumption of vitamin D-containing foods or supplements is often necessary to prevent deficiency. Experts recommend a daily intake of between 400 and 800 IU of vitamin D through dietary sources or supplements for adults over 50.

Osteoporosis, a disease characterized by low bone mass and structural deterioration of bone tissue, can lead to bone fragility and increased susceptibility to fractures, especially of the hip, spine and wrist. It is often called the "silent disease" because bone loss occurs without symptoms. People may not know that they have osteoporosis until their bones become so weak that a sudden strain, bump or fall from standing height causes a fracture or a vertebra to collapse. One in two women over age 50 will have an osteoporosis-related fracture in her remaining lifetime.