

Sunshine and Vitamin D. A Comprehensive Guide to the Benefits of the “Sunshine Vitamin”

Frank Murray, Laguna Beach, CA: Basic Health Publications, 2008, 234 pages. US \$18.95

This encyclopedic review of vitamin D is an astonishing work. Every physician knows that an absence of this vitamin causes rickets. Most Americans get their vitamin D from skin synthesis, fortified foods (especially milk), and fatty fish, if they even think about it; and vitamin D is necessary for calcium metabolism.

This book reveals the interaction of vitamin D and its metabolites in numerous other processes, from neurologic diseases like amyotrophic lateral sclerosis to osteoarthritis, osteoporosis, and osteomalacia. Its synthesis is prevented by sunscreens and slowed by pigmented skin. Gum disease and prostate problems involve it. Numerous other disorders have vitamin D shortage in their pathogenesis: cancer, celiac disease, Crohn's disease, cystic fibrosis, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, thalassemia, and a host of other organ diseases.

All assertions are heavily referenced. The author, while not a physician, is a former editor of a number of scientific journals aimed at the laity. He includes definitions of many medical terms. What makes this book a bit cumbersome is the citing of references and the degrees of the authors in the text as well as at the end. This habit interrupts the smooth reading and is unnecessary (although a lay audience may welcome it).

Vitamin D and its metabolites might well be the supermen of nature, and it behooves physicians to get the levels of this supervitamin (or is it a hormone?) in their patients with unexplained symptoms or any of the above illnesses.

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