

Sunlight and Vitamin D: Role in chronic inflammatory diseases

Vitamin D, also called the sunshine vitamin, is critical to not just bone health but overall health as is outlined in the picture below. Because of its many effects in the body, Vitamin D is considered to be hormone and not just a vitamin. Unfortunately, Vitamin D deficiency is an epidemic amongst Indian city dwellers. According to the Indian Hospitals Prevalent studies report, 37-99% of Indian population have Vitamin D deficiency because of a preference for an indoor lifestyle and purdah system. The best source of vitamin D is sunbathing with 30-40% of bare skin exposed between 8-10 AM or 4-7 PM when the sunlight is not too intense. Sunbathing regularly, and sun-gazing for 5-10 minutes within an hour of the sunrise or sunset has many beneficial effects such as:

- Hormonal balance – Stimulating factors for Insulin, Thyroid, cortisol, growth, and sleep hormone melatonin get released from the brain on exposure to morning sunlight or bright dawn light. Late sleepers or those who do not get exposure to morning day or sunlight miss out on this benefit. Deficiency of these hormones has become an epidemic in the urban city dwellers.
- Strengthening of the Immune system.
- Prevention of chronic inflammation – The anti-inflammatory properties of vitamin D help reduce the pain and swelling of the muscles and the joints.

The ideal way to get vitamin D is from the Sunshine, not the tablets and injections. Naturally, synthesized vitamin D is stored in the liver and gets used as needed. Its effect lasts twice as longer than vitamin D tablets. One can get overdosed by taking Vitamin D by pills and injections, but one can never overdose when Vitamin D is manufactured in the skin by the sunshine.

