PATIENT INFORMATION

Vitamin D supplements in Migraine

Some reports show that taking vitamin D supplements may be beneficial in some patients suffering from headaches, especially migraines, to reduce the frequency of headaches.

Vitamin D deficiency affects approximately 30–80% of children and adults worldwide. The percentage of subjects with vitamin D deficiency and insufficiency among migraineurs and headache patients has been reported to vary between 45 and 100%. In a number of studies, a low vitamin D level was linked with an increase in frequency of headache and migraine attacks. The present findings show that supplementation with this vitamin in a dose of 1000-4000 IU/d (25mcg – 100mcg) could reduce the frequency of attacks in migraineurs.

The deficiency can occur due to several factors, mostly by inadequate sun exposure, including avoiding sunlight due to light sensitivity in migraine. Other risk factors include old age, darkly pigmented skin, latitude, winter season, clothing, sunscreen, air pollution, smoking, housebound, obesity, malabsorption, renal or liver disease and medications (including anticonvulsants). Sufficient levels of circulating vitamin D are necessary for the absorption of several minerals, particularly calcium, but also phosphorus and magnesium. It also has many other functions which include reducing inflammation, influencing the immune systems, modulating cell growth, and controlling the neuromuscular system. It is also a potent antioxidant.

It is difficult to get enough vitamin D from food alone however it is found naturally in small amounts in:
• oily fish – both fresh and tinned – such as salmon, mackerel, trout, kippers and sardines
• eggs and meat.

Some foods have vitamin D added to them, including some breakfast cereals, soya and dairy products, powdered milks and low-fat spreads and margarines (amounts in these products vary and are often quite small).

Current advice recommends that **all adults and children** over the age of one should consider taking a daily supplement containing 400 IU/10 micrograms of Vitamin D especially during autumn and winter.

The current evidence indicates that patients with migraine and other headache should consider taking a supplement of at least 1000 IU/25mcg micrograms of Vitamin D daily.

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.