

A LETTER FROM DR. MCMANUS



GREAT NEWS FOR VITAMINS AND MINERALS!

Three studies published in the February 23, 2009 issue of the *Archives of Internal Medicine* paint a very positive picture for dietary supplements. And given the tendency for the media to focus on bad news for diet and health, we wanted to make sure that these important studies didn't get buried by the recent onslaught of negative press relating to the economy, the banking system, or most importantly, your health.

First, National Institutes of Health (NIH) researchers following nearly half a million older adults found that increasing calcium consumption in women was associated with a lower risk of developing cancer. The beneficial effect seemed to peak at about 1,300 mg of calcium daily. A similar effect on total cancer wasn't seen in men perhaps because women were more likely to take a multivitamin/mineral supplement that contained calcium, and much more likely to take a calcium supplement regularly.

But men and women were found to be in agreement on at least one thing. A diet rich in calcium from foods and supplements was associated with a lower risk of developing cancers of the digestive system, including colon cancer. In fact, men and women with the highest calcium intakes had a 16 and 23% lower risk respectively for digestive system cancers compared to those with the lowest calcium intakes.

[Click here to read an abstract of the article](#)

Need help battling colds this winter? Maybe you should make sure you're getting enough vitamin D. Intrigued by the recent studies suggesting vitamin D is a key immune system player, NIH researchers examined blood vitamin D levels in the US population to see if there was any relationship to frequency of colds. Sure enough, the higher the blood level of vitamin D, the lower the frequency of reported upper respiratory tract infections. Those with the lowest vitamin D levels had a 36% increased risk of catching a cold when compared to those with the highest levels. The link was even stronger in those with existing respiratory conditions. For example, asthmatics with the lowest vitamin D status were nearly six times as vulnerable to colds as those with the highest vitamin D blood levels.

[Click here to read an abstract of the article](#)

Observational studies, including the two just mentioned, are important for identifying associations between nutrients and risk for disease, but clinical trials are the gold standard of scientific research because of their rigor and their ability to determine causality. The third study published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* is an important clinical trial on the use of B vitamins for the prevention of age-related macular degeneration (AMD). AMD is the leading cause of irreversible vision loss in

older Americans and an estimated 1.75 million in the US have an advanced case of AMD, while 7.3 million have it in the early stages.

In this study, 5442 women, 40 years of age and older, who had some evidence of heart disease, were randomly assigned to take a dietary supplement of folic acid, vitamin B6, and vitamin B12, or a placebo. After an average of 7.3 years of taking the dietary supplements, those taking the supplemental B vitamins had a 34% lower risk of developing AMD than those taking the placebo. Supplementation with B vitamins as shown in this study is the first public health measure ever identified that reduces the chance of developing AMD, other than the avoidance of cigarette smoking.

[Click here to read an abstract of the article](#)

These studies should remind us all of the importance of diet and supplements including calcium, vitamin D, and critical B vitamins to support optimum health. For those seeking more information on these studies, we've provided direct links to the study abstracts published on PubMed, a service of the US National Library of Medicine that includes over 18 million citations from MEDLINE and other life science journals.

Until next time...Here's to your health!



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