

Letter from Dr. McManus: Vitamin D and Calcium

Hello Shaklee Family,

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) just released the report “Dietary Reference Intakes for Calcium and Vitamin D” that establishes higher recommended intake levels for vitamin D. The new Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for children and adults ages 1–70 has been increased to 600 IU per day, and the RDA for those ages 71 and older has been raised to 800 IU per day. The Tolerable Upper Intake Level was raised from 2,000 to 4,000 IU per day for adults. Calcium intake RDAs increased only slightly, with a range of 700–1,300 mg per day, depending on age and sex. The full report can be accessed at <http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2010/Dietary-Reference-Intakes-for-Calcium-and-Vitamin-D/Report-Brief.aspx>.

We recognize that the goals of the IOM are to make broad-based recommendations for the entire population and to develop reference values that serve to guide nutrient guidelines for the U.S. and Canada. We applaud the IOM for updating the vitamin D and calcium nutritional reference values established in 1997 for the potential far-reaching benefits to public health, but we also believe that such modest adjustments in recommended intakes may underserve the many population groups who are at potential risk for low intakes of calcium and/or vitamin D.

We also want to take this opportunity to reiterate that the Shaklee mission is to support optimal health for everyone, and in this case, we believe the potential benefits of calcium and vitamin D supplementation go well beyond simple nutritional adequacy and bone health. Scientific research links vitamin D inadequacy to an increased risk for certain cancers, as well as cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, and diabetes—and higher intakes of vitamin D may help reduce the risk of developing these diseases. These are precisely the reasons we conducted our own extensive review of the scientific literature and sponsored two independent vitamin D research studies. We also recently adjusted our individual vitamin D intake recommendations based on an individual’s risk factors for vitamin D insufficiency.

It has been estimated that as many as 80% of Americans may have “insufficient” blood levels of vitamin D, and there are many reasons why low vitamin D levels seem to be commonplace today. The season or calendar month is a major risk factor for vitamin D insufficiency because sunlight during the winter months is less efficient at triggering vitamin D production in the skin. The risk for vitamin D insufficiency rises as sunscreen use and time spent indoors increase. The geographical latitude of your residence is another determinant of sun exposure, and those with darker skin are less efficient at converting sunlight to vitamin D. Other factors that can increase risks for vitamin D inadequacy include increasing age, increasing body mass index, lack of exercise, and limited intake of fish and other vitamin D-rich foods in the diet.

While we support the IOM for the long-awaited adjustments to the calcium RDAs, increases to the vitamin D RDAs, and the increased Safe Upper Levels of Intake (UL) for vitamin D, we also

remain committed to individualized and potentially higher vitamin D intake recommendations based on an individual's unique vitamin D risk-factor profile.

For more information about calcium, vitamin D, and your health, talk with your doctor or health care professional to discuss the steps you should take to achieve optimal calcium and vitamin D intakes. To obtain an individual vitamin D intake recommendation from Shaklee Health Sciences based on your own risk-factor profile, take the Vitamin D-Ology questionnaire at http://www.shaklee.net/members/articles/top_news/VitaminD_quiz

Sending warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jamie McManus". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "M".