

Postbag

Your Letters



Do you have something to say or helpful information to pass on? Whether it's gripes and groans, a pat on the back, or hints and tips, we'd love to hear from you. Please write to: Judy Graham, Editor, New Pathways, MSRC, 7 Peartree Business Centre, Peartree Road, Stanway, Colchester, Essex CO3 0JN
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If At First You Don't Succeed, Try, Try and Try Again . . .

Dear New Pathways,
I have read all the New Pathways magazines and really like the information it gives out. I started thinking that I really wasn't doing enough to take control of my illness but felt unable to follow some of the regimes mentioned like the best bet diet and the huge amount of supplements that some people take.

Last October I hit a really low patch, was unable to walk far, felt moody and tearful and generally didn't want to join in any family activities or socialise with friends. Most unlike me!! I even bought an expensive electric scooter but felt so depressed at having to use it.

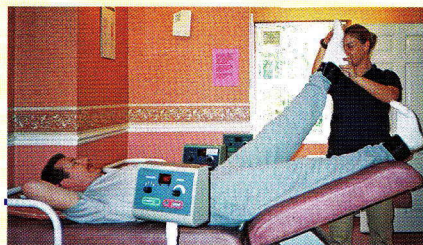


One day I thought I really cannot go on like this and decided to contact my nearest MS Therapy Centre in Bedford. I embarked on a course of hyperbaric oxygen therapy which I continued over several months and felt it was really helpful in getting me back on my feet.

Added to this, I now take Prozac, magnesium, starflower oil and a good all-round Vitamin B supplement. I have lost 2 stone in weight by following a low fat, sensible eating plan and attending a diet class and have been able to exercise for the first time in ages.

In a previous issue, a gentleman recommended toning tables so I decided to give it a go. What a difference!! Not just the exercise, which is just right for people with MS, but also the social side-I have such a laugh for that hour and

always come out smiling as well as toned up!



I have recently been offered Beta Interferon, but have decided not to go for it as I feel so well at the moment.

At last I actually feel it's me calling the shots for once and not the other way round. Keep up the good work!

Gill Foreman
Kettering

Vitamin D in High Doses: Could it Cause My Diarrhoea?

Dear New Pathways,
Congratulations on a brilliant magazine.

Your article about vitamin D featured a bottle of Solgar Vitamin D. I'm not sure if you are aware that this brand also contains high dose Vitamin A.

Here is an extract of a recent e-mail from them on the subject: 'Solgar's Vitamin D 400IU Softgels and Vitamin D 1,000IU Softgels are cholecalciferol (natural vitamin D3), from primarily skipjack fish and other assorted 'Atlantic Ocean' fish.

Please be aware these vitamin D products also contain naturally occurring vitamin A. The Vitamin D 400IU Softgels contain 1000IU of vitamin A per softgel, and the Vitamin D 1,000IU Softgels contain 3000IU of vitamin A per softgel. After receiving this I changed to D3 from Freeda Pharmacy in the USA.

I am taking 3,000 IU vitamin D3 daily but am getting a bit nervous as - though it may not be connected at all - I keep getting bouts of urgent loose bowel movement.

Could this side effect be vitamin D? Or maybe the 100 mg complex

I have recently started taking?

Hope you can help, keep up the excellent work.

Kindest regards,
Sue Holloway

Ed replies:

Vitamin D is known to be toxic at high doses. Side effects do include diarrhoea.

The 100mg of B complex is unlikely to be the guilty party.

Why not try cutting down the dose of vitamin D and see what happens? You could also try doing the same with the B complex. You could also try getting a vitamin D test from your GP.

Vitamin D - 'High Doses Safe.'

Dear New Pathways,
I am writing in response to the article on Vitamin D to confirm that scientists have stated that a dose of 4 000IU is perfectly safe.

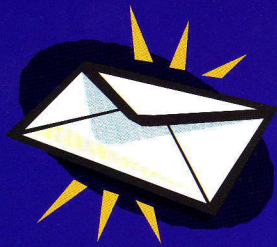
In a long and detailed scientific paper on this subject by Vieth et al, Vitamin D is implicated in the prevention of some cancers, osteoarthritis, hypertension and multiple sclerosis. This article reports that "Total-body sun exposure easily provides the equivalent of 10 000 IU of vitamin D3" and in fact "to ensure that 25(OH)D concentrations exceed 100nmol/L, a total vitamin D supply of 4 000IU is required."

This article states "except in those with conditions causing hypersensitivity, there is no evidence of adverse effects with serum 25(OH)D concentrations 140 nmol/L, which requires a total vitamin D supply of 10 000IU/d. Published cases of vitamin D toxicity .all involve intake of > or = 40 000 IU/d.", which is far far more than the 4000IU a day Ashton Embry recommends for people with MS.

This article concludes after clearly stating that a dosage on 4,000IU of Vitamin D is perfectly safe, "If by analogy with other nutrients, Vitamin D

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supplementation is intended to make up for what some people may not be getting from its natural source, in this case the sun, then the current adult DRI of 200 IU is woefully inadequate".

Like many of you I too was unsure that 4,000IU of Vitamin D was safe until I read this scientific article. Now I think it is far more risky NOT to take this dosage of vitamin D daily, when you take a look at the evidence.

1: Vit D3 has been shown to be effective in suppressing immune system activity.

2: An Unpublished Study by Graham Bentham of East Anglia University states

sunshine may prevent MS.

3: Another recent study has shown that vitamin D-3 supplements have a positive effect in the blood chemistry of people with MS.

4: In a further study MS lesion activity has been shown to correlate with the seasonal fluctuation of vitamin D in the body.

5: We also know that MS tends to be less prevalent in fishing communities and this could be because fish is a rich source of vitamin D.

I also find that sunshine is very beneficial in terms of stabilising my MS, provided I don't overheat that is!!! Doctors may disagree with 4,000IU of vitamin D3 a day but scientists say that it is perfectly safe, and lack of vitamin D3 could even turn out to be one of the causal factors of MS.

This supplement doesn't cost very much and at the very least will do me no harm and could probably prove highly beneficial – so I am hedging my bets and taking it!

Sylvia Brown

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References on Resources page.

Ed replies:

It seems that the vitamin D from sunlight may not be assimilated in the same way as vitamin D from a dietary supplement. A day exposed

to the sun can generate 10,000 IU of vitamin D, but some would say that 'the body is effectively able to rid itself of any extra vitamin D from sunlight, so it is unlikely you would take in this much' – Dr Sarah Brewer, Editor, Daily Telegraph Encyclopaedia of Vitamins, Minerals and Herbal Supplements.

In the Nutritional Health Bible, nutritionist Linda Lazarides says: "Although the body is unlikely to make excessive vitamin D from exposure to sunlight, orally-ingested vitamin D can build up to toxic levels if heavily over-supplemented."

You state that 'scientists' say that high doses of vitamin D are safe. But in fact you only quote one, Reinhold Vieth PhD, who is talking about vitamin D from sunshine, not oral supplementation. Maybe there is a difference.

The issue does not seem to be the link between vitamin D and MS, but whether large amounts such as 4000 IU are safe or not when taken in supplements rather than sunshine.

Vitamin D – Get Tested

Dear New Pathways,

I enjoyed the article on vitamin D and MS; a detailed discussion is long overdue. However, I do have some comments.

No discussion of vitamin D and MS can be complete without mention of Reinhold Vieth PhD, a biochemist from the University of Toronto, whose work Ashton Embry continually refers to in his Best Bet Diet programme.

Veith argues that not only is the current adult RDA for vitamin D "woefully inadequate" but is based more on 19th century folklore than on any sound scientific reasoning.

Almost 40 years ago, in the absence of any real knowledge on the subject, a committee decided that, as a teaspoon of cod liver oil had been given to children to prevent rickets, half this dose would be a safe and reasonable

long-term measure for adults. This being so, any attempt to portray the current standard opinion on vitamin D dosage as an example of reasoned and credible argument can surely not be justified.

The article also missed the most crucial aspect of the vitamin D story – the 25(OH)D test. Each individual can have their level of vitamin D checked by asking their GP to arrange a 25(OH)D test.

It is this level that is the measure of relative vitamin D deficiency. In order to enjoy the protective benefits of vitamin D, the level should be over 100 nmol/L. You may need to insist on knowing the actual level – a "normal" result is not enough.

Those following the Best Bet Diet are advised to have their 25(OH)D levels checked every 3 to 6 months to ensure that the supplementation is having the desired effect.

The 4000iu figure is the estimated amount of vitamin D3 supplementation required to raise the level of 25(OH)D to above 100nmol/L, in an individual with vitamin D deficiency and limited access to all-year sunshine.



Individuals from countries with low rates of MS tend to have levels of 25(OH)D in the 100 to 163 nmol/L range.

Veith also argues that not only is the 4000iu dose safe for those who have limited exposure to all-year sunshine, eg UK residents, but also that any reported cases of toxicity – hypercalcemia – have arisen with levels of over 40,000iu ten times the suggested dose.

Further, the 4000iu dose has been specifically tested and proven to be safe. Veith describes how a trial consisting of two groups of healthy adults were given supplements of vitamin D3 during January to May, and had their 25(OH)D levels checked and compared with the summertime levels of a group who were taking no supplements at all. One of the