Vitamin D – let the sunshine in!

People keep asking me what the difference is between vitamin D, D2 and D3. There are differences that have an impact. All D vitamins are fat-soluble. Your body needs them for a variety of tasks, including maintaining healthy bones or a functioning immune system [1]. A deficiency can manifest itself in many diseases [2]. A study from 2020 concluded that vitamin D also reduces the risk of influenza and Covid-19 infections [3].

Vitamin D is produced in your body through sunlight. However, people living in northern latitudes do not receive enough sunlight, especially in the months of October to March, to get the sunlight needed to produce the daily requirement. A study published at the beginning of 2020 showed that up to 40% of Europeans have a vitamin D deficiency [4]. If you use UV-resistant sunscreen in summer, you prevent your skin from absorbing the UV rays that stimulate vitamin D production.

Is vitamin D in food?

Vitamin D2, also known as ergocalciferol, is found in plant foods, especially wild mushrooms. If you are a vegetarian, you can produce vitamin D2 yourself using cultivated mushrooms and sunlight [5].

Vitamin D3, also known as cholecalciferol, is found in animal foods, e.g. egg yolk, beef liver, fatty fish or fish oil.

What is the difference between vitamin D2 or D3?

A study conducted by the National Institutes of Health in 2008 [6] investigated which form of vitamin D is better absorbed by the body. Vitamin D3 was almost twice as effective as vitamin D2. Another study [7] from 2012 came to a similar conclusion.

How can you optimize your vitamin D levels?

Let the sun shine on you whenever possible with as much free skin as possible. Only 20-30 minutes are necessary for your skin to produce enough vitamin D3. If the sun is not shining, you can cover your daily dose by taking vitamin D3 supplements. When buying such products, make sure you are getting vitamin D3 and not vitamin D2 (it is cheaper but less effective).

The safe dosage

With 5000 IU (International Units) a day you'll cover your needs without harm [8]. The officially recommended amount is much lower, at only 800-1000 IU.

Do you need to check your current vitamin D status in advance?

The analysis of vitamin D in the blood costs approx. 50 €. If you live in northern latitudes, you can assume that you suffer from a deficiency and take the above-mentioned dose daily.

If you want to find out about the health-promoting use of vitamin D in a short and concise but easy-to-understand way and with scientific evidence, it is worth browsing through an exciting booklet [9].

References:

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[9] Von Helden, Gesund in sieben Tagen Erfolge mit der Vitamin-D-Therapie

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