

HEALTH *IN* ALASKA

Turning Winter Woes Into Winter Wonder

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Have you ever wondered how some people can breeze right through the darkness of winter feeling happy and well, yet you find yourself struggling to maintain and feel your best?

For many people, the short, dark, cold winter days of northern latitudes can contribute to various health issues not typically experienced during the warmer summer months. Such symptoms may include an increased desire to sleep, an increased appetite - particularly for carbohydrates, mood changes ranging from lethargy to downright depression and increased muscle and joint pain.

Why would anybody enjoy winter feeling sleepy, hungry, depressed and in pain? There may be a very simple answer to such struggles - our Vitamin D level is typically at a seasonal low level.

Many people think they are getting enough Vitamin D through dairy products, multivitamins and spending time outdoors. While these measures are helpful, recent research indicates that current recommendations for Vitamin D intake are drastically inadequate.

At the same time, researchers have discovered additional health benefits associated with Vitamin D. Vitamin D has natural anti-inflammatory properties, increases insulin sensitivity, stabilizes appetite, regulates neurotransmitters linked to mood, improves immune function and modulates calcium balance.

Deficiency in Vitamin D is now associated with at least 17 different cancers. Cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal ailments, metabolic disorders, autoimmune and inflammatory conditions are also linked to such deficiency.

There are a few myths surrounding Vitamin D. Often, many people think too much Vitamin D is toxic. It is important to know there are two forms of Vitamin D regularly found over the counter. One form is Vitamin D2 (ergocalciferol) and the other is Vitamin D3 (cholecalciferol). Vitamin D2 has a potential for toxicity while Vitamin D3 has been shown to be typically safe. Therefore, choose Vitamin D3 when supplementing your Vitamin D level.

Few Alaskans get the Vitamin D they need for optimal health, so it's a good idea to have your Vitamin D level evaluated, as well as your calcium level (to maintain adequate balance). Once a baseline Vitamin D level is established, increasing to an optimum range is relatively easy. There are capsules and drops that may be taken orally, and intramuscular injections that help bring levels into a healthy range.

By simply supporting your vitamin D level, you too may join the ranks of those who breeze through our Alaska winters feeling happy and well!

A NewLife Clinic routinely evaluates Vitamin D levels and provides a variety of services to help Alaskans meet their individual health care goals. For more information call (907) 563-2873.