

[IMAGE]

Can Vitamin D Help Fight MS?

By James P. Meschino, DC, MS

Numerous studies suggest low levels of vitamin D in the blood are strongly linked to increased risk of developing multiple sclerosis (MS); and that MS patients with low blood levels of vitamin D (25-hydroxycholecalciferol) are more likely to have greater disability and more disease activity. The ground-breaking study by E. S. Sotirchos, et al., published in the January 2016 issue of *Neurology*, showed that MS patients administered high-dose vitamin D (10,400 IU per day), supplemented over a six month period, had a reduction in the percentage of inflammatory T cells related to MS severity.

The study included 40 people with relapsing-remitting MS. Patients in the control group, who were given 800 IU per day of vitamin D, did not show a reduction in these MS inflammatory markers. For the patients ingesting 10,400 IU of vitamin D per day, when the increase in vitamin D levels in the blood over baseline levels was greater than 18 ng/ml (45 nmol/L) every additional 5 ng/ml (12.5 nmol/L) increase in vitamin D led to a 1 percent decrease in the percentage of inflammatory T cells in the blood. Patients taking the low dose did not experience any noticeable changes in the percentages of their T cell subsets.

The hope is that these changes in inflammatory T cell responses translate into a reduced severity of disease, and other clinical trials are underway to determine if that is the case. However, these findings are quite encouraging, especially considering that no significant side effects were reported by MS patients administered the high-dose vitamin D supplementation protocol compared with those taking the low-dose protocol.

Other Vitamin D Studies Involving MS Patients

Presenting at the American Academy of Neurology in 2009, Dr. Jodie Burton revealed the results of a vitamin D trial in MS patients. This study suggests high doses of vitamin D (14,000 IU per day for one year) dramatically cut the relapse rate in people with multiple sclerosis compared to those given only 1,000 IU per day of vitamin D over the same time period.

More specifically, 16 percent of 25 MS patients in the high-dose vitamin D group suffered relapses during the one-year period, compared to 40 percent in the low-dose vitamin D group (24 MS patients).

Additionally, patients taking high-dose vitamin D suffered 41 percent fewer relapses than the year before the study began, compared with 17 percent fewer relapses by patients taking typical doses (1,000 IU – the amount typically recommended to MS patients by neurologists). Also encouraging was the fact that patients taking high doses of vitamin D did not suffer any significant side effects.

Editor's Note: To read a longer, more technical version of this article that includes complete references, [click here](#).

James Meschino, DC, MS, practices in Toronto, Ontario, Canada and is the author of four nutrition books, including *The Meschino Optimal Living Program* and *Break the Weight Loss Barrier*.

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