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According to research published in the American Journal of Epidemiology, increased blood levels of vitamin D may reduce the risk of colorectal cancer by up to 40%.

VITAMIN D₃ MAY REDUCE RISK OF COLORECTAL CANCER

In a new study, researchers examined the association between circulating 25-hydroxyvitamin D(3), the best indicator of total vitamin D exposure, and incident, sporadic colorectal cancer risk. Data was obtained from a pooled analysis of three colonoscopy-based case-control studies conducted in Minnesota, North Carolina, and South Carolina between 1991 and 2002. In total, 616 people individuals with colorectal cancer were compared to 770 polyp-free control subjects.

Analysis showed that higher circulating vitamin D₃ concentrations were associated with a decrease in colorectal cancer risk of 40%. In participants that were also using NSAIDs (anti-inflammatory medications), the potential risk reduction of higher vitamin D levels increased to 66%.

These findings support the idea that higher vitamin D levels may reduce the risk of colorectal cancer, especially when combined with anti-inflammatory agents. The human body manufactures vitamin D upon exposure to sunshine, but in some northern regions sunlight levels during the winter are inadequate for synthesizing vitamin D. Therefore, dietary supplements and fortified foods are generally an efficient way to boost circulating levels of vitamin D.

Fedirko RM, et al. Blood 25-Hydroxyvitamin D₃ Concentrations and Incident Sporadic Colorectal Adenoma Risk: A Pooled Case-Control Study V. 2010. American Journal of Epidemiology [Epub ahead of print].