

September 28th, 2011

Even during the summer, many American children are not getting enough Vitamin D.

VITAMIN D SUPPLEMENTS MAY BE NECESSARY FOR CHILDREN

Vitamin D is used by the body to promote calcium absorption, is necessary for normal bone and tooth development and it has additional roles in the body such as modulating cell growth, reducing inflammation, and aiding immune function. Vitamin D deficiency in children can cause rickets, which results in skeletal deformities and muscular weakness.

The primary way to obtain vitamin D is through outdoor sun exposure. Vitamin D is synthesized in the skin when it is exposed to ultraviolet B (UVB) rays. These UVB rays however, can be cut out by windows, clouds, and sunscreen and skin color.

A recent study published in *Environmental Health Perspectives* has found that many American children are not getting enough vitamin D from sun exposure alone. Only some Caucasian children, who do not diligently wear sunscreen, were getting enough vitamin D, and this was only during the summer months. Other children had lower vitamin D levels in the summer, and all had lower levels throughout the rest of the year. This means that vitamin D must be acquired from another source.

Very few foods contain vitamin D naturally, so it has been added to many. Despite food fortification, the data in this study suggests that many American children still do not get enough vitamin D to meet the recommended dietary reference intake (DRI). This suggests that supplements may play an important role in getting to the recommended DRI of 600 IU daily (children ages 1 – 8).

Godar DE, Pope SJ, Burgess Grant W, Holick MF. Solar UV Doses of Young Americans and Vitamin D3 Production. 2011. Environmental Health Perspectives.