

Real Health Podcast

Brought to you by the Riordan Clinic



Episode #36: Vitamin D

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Intro: This is the Real Health podcast brought to you by Riordan Clinic. Our mission is to bring you the latest information and top experts in functional and integrative medicine to help you make informed decisions on your path to real health.

Dr. Ron Hunninghake: Well, welcome everyone. It's Dr. Ron Hunninghake with the Real Health podcast here from Riordan Clinic, and it's my good fortune today to once again have Mike Shaw who's my medical assistant here, and he's been at the Riordan Clinic now five years already?

Mike Shaw: Five years.

Dr. Ron Hunninghake: We just got here yesterday.

Mike Shaw: How time flies.

Dr. Ron Hunninghake: I know. Hey today, we've got a really neat topic. We're going to be introducing something that a lot of you already know about namely vitamin D3 K2. Mike, what's your basic understanding of vitamin D3 K2?

Mike Shaw: Well, my basic understanding is that the vitamin D, which can be synthesized through sunlight, UV light in the skin, is one, is a vitamin D2 but the body converts it with a steroid to a pro hormone called D3 25 hydroxy D3. So in one respect, it is a vitamin that supports many essential things in the body, but the hormonal component really assists a lot of organ system function, harmony, inflammation. It's kind of the gatekeeper that keeps everything on track and healthy.

Dr. Ron Hunninghake: And what's really interesting is that we're going to get to just how incredibly important it is. But look at what's happened in our modern world. We've all moved indoors. And so if this is a vitamin that we need the sun to help us convert it to the activated state, aren't we running the danger of not having enough vitamin D?

Mike Shaw: Well, I think there's lots of analysis out there that says a large majority of the population is either low or deficient in D3. And in fact, here at the clinic, when we have new patients come in and we do baseline lab work, many times they're at the bottom or in the deficiency category on the scale.

Dr. Ron Hunninghake: Yeah. I like to see people at least over 35 or 40, that's to me, the bare minimum, and we have people coming in with sevens.

Mike Shaw: Yes.

Dr. Ron Hunninghake: And, and especially if you've, if you've got dark skin pigmentation, and even if you're out the sun, you're not going to convert vitamin D or the precursor cholesterol into the vitamin D. So you may even need more vitamin D than what the sun can give you.

Mike Shaw: And I think that's true because for one thing, atmospheric changes, pollution, blocking UV light getting down and us getting enough time to have exposure to enough UV light to generate enough D3, I don't know how you, in this day and age that you get out of the thing, if you want a good D3 level, if you don't supplement.

Dr. Ron Hunninghake: I think that's the safe way to go, especially given the fact that there are concerns about too much sunshine, and so trying to work that all out can be tricky.

Dr. Ron Hunninghake: To me, the best thing is once or twice a year, go in and get your vitamin D level checked. And so when you have a patient come in and you've advised this, what sort of a target level are you shooting for, and what kind of dosing do you think they would need in order to get that target level?

Mike Shaw: Well, I usually at a minimum focus on achieving a blood level above 60, but I guess my bullseye target is to be closer to the 80 mark. Labcorp and Quest, two largest labs in the world, their reference ranges are 30 to 100. I believe out here at Riordan our reference range is 40 to 80. So I always try to target the 80.

Dr. Ron Hunninghake: Yeah. And there's a safety factor. We do recommend vitamin D3 and vitamin K2 used together. So could you just tell me a little bit, why would vitamin K2 be a safety factor in terms of people taking these otherwise larger doses of vitamin D?

Mike Shaw: Yeah, because vitamin D3 has a lot to do with calcium regulation and bone support. And K2 helps in the regulation of the amount of calcium that well, helping it get into bone and not letting it spread out to other areas like the arterial wall, leading to stiffening and hardening of the artery, or into cardiac muscle or skeletal muscle that doesn't allow them to perform as they normally would.

Dr. Ron Hunninghake: Right now, vitamin D is traditionally known to be a way of helping prevent Rickets, the bowleggedness that little boys used to get, when they actually, it was prominent in the 1800s, 1900s, in England, because there was so much smog and stuff in the air that there was not enough sunlight getting in.

Dr. Ron Hunninghake: And so they became vitamin D deficient because of lack of sunshine. So it's really, it's kind of an equivalent situation now, except just people are just staying indoors.

Dr. Ron Hunninghake: So, Rickets was the main thing that, and a lot of doctors that's what they think about is just preventing Rickets. Give me a broad canvas sketch of what are some of the multiple benefits of having a good level of vitamin D like in the 60 to 80 range, let's say.

Mike Shaw: Well, one is not just a deformity like Rickets in infants, but also in adults, especially aging adults, osteomalacia or a decrease in density of bone that can lead to fracture or collapse of the vertebral column. Those are important still on the bone support, but vitamin D3 is a pro hormone, virtually affects every organ system in the body and enhances the way they perform and function.

Mike Shaw: It's very strong on immune system support. It's very strong on reducing inflammatory response in the body, which is a driving force for disruption on many fronts. So D3 covers a huge amount of bases.

Dr. Ron Hunninghake: Just recently of course, we're hopefully coming out of the pandemic and COVID. There's a website that's called vitamin D Wiki. It's like an encyclopedia of vitamin D research, and there are 125 different categories of health that it covers. It's very easy to navigate.

Dr. Ron Hunninghake: I've been surprised that COVID, at the beginning of the pandemic two and a half years ago, there was no research on vitamin D and COVID control. And now there are over 900 studies in this area. So immune system is huge in terms of, if you want to avoid, not only COVID but the flu or other more chronic infectious problems, it looks like keeping a good vitamin D level helps a lot.

Mike Shaw: Well, in patients that we come in that have, unfortunately autoimmune disease dysfunction, vitamin D is a huge support in either slowing or regressing, those disorders like rheumatoid arthritis and Hashimotos or thyroid dysfunctionality.

Dr. Ron Hunninghake: Yeah. And even the leaky gut, they're saying that it all goes back to leaky gut and your microbiome and vitamin D has the ability to regulate that area as well. And so, your whole area is cardiovascular disease. You spent many, many years in the, in the area of cardiovascular. Does it help out in terms of preventing heart attacks?

Mike Shaw: Well, I think it definitely has a strong influence because heart attacks, one, have to do with a lack of blood flow into the cardiac muscle and D3 tends to maintain flexibility and elasticity of the arterial system. And it supports the cardiac muscle itself because a stiffened cardiac muscle doesn't pump blood like a flexible, relaxed cardiac.

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Dr. Ron Hunninghake: And back to the whole calcium story here, you can go in and get a calcium score where you get your heart scanned and you can find out how much calcium is in your arteries. If you're

taking vitamin D3 and especially with the K2, that's going to help you keep that excess calcium out of your arteries, and so you're going to maintain arterial flexibility and better blood flow.

Mike Shaw: And I think remembering that the combination of just not taking D3, but it is always be coupled with vitamin K2 is what a team.

Dr. Ron Hunninghake: Yeah. It basically makes it foolproof. Everyone's concerned. Well, what if I get too much? What if I just accidentally get over 100 or something like that? We have been carefully monitoring our patients now for the last 10 years, looking at not only the vitamin D levels, but also at the serum calcium levels. And I can tell you categorically that in these last 10 years, I've never seen anyone, I've never seen it cause hypercalcemia in our patients. So that's a big one.

Dr. Ron Hunninghake: And speaking of calcium, that's in the wrong places, in women who are going in to have mammograms in order to prevent breast cancer, one of the things they're looking for is calcifications in the breast. So if you're taking your vitamin D and your K2, you're going to help keep those out. But there is just independent research on vitamin D alone as a major factor for reducing the growing incidence of breast cancer.

Dr. Ron Hunninghake: I used to tell women it's one in eight, it's jumped to one in five women now are predicted to get breast cancer, and one of the key prevention steps that you can take is get your vitamin D level measured at least once a year. And you say, well, wait a minute. I think I taken enough. Well, don't think you take enough measure. You're always better off if you can measure and have that assurance that you're in that 60 to 80 range.

Mike Shaw: If you're going to institute a nutrient replacement program, the value of doing that is knowing that you are accomplishing something. And how do you know if you've accomplished this unless you look at what your blood levels of each of those nutrients that are important are?

Dr. Ron Hunninghake: Yeah. You can't manage what you don't measure. And so Dr. Riordan was big on using the laboratory as a way of verifying that you really are in a safe zone and a highly effective zone of vitamin D functioning.

Dr. Ron Hunninghake: Wow, we've covered a big part of it. One of the areas that I think a lot of people aren't aware of is, your dental health. You want to have strong teeth, you want to prevent periodontal disease. So vitamin D is an inflammation regulator, so keeping your bones and your teeth healthy.

Dr. Ron Hunninghake: Parkinson's disease, a lot of your chronic Alzheimer's, those types of things, that's due to inflammation all throughout your body. The mitochondrial functioning itself can be regulated by vitamin D functioning as well. What about mental health? Does mental health, does vitamin D play into that?

Mike Shaw: Well, I know those studies have been done that, it's like how your mood is elevated when you're out in the sun. There's correlation about in the sun and more D3 being charged into your system there. I think there's a lot of evidence that supports better mood and affect and outlook with better levels of D3.

Dr. Ron Hunninghake: Exactly.

Mike Shaw: Moving away, in many respects, maybe we can deal with some of the depression issues without having to use antidepressants if people had therapeutic levels of D3.

Dr. Ron Hunninghake: You just reminded me, people say they're in a dark mood, or you are the sunshine of my life. Well, that says a whole lot right there in terms of how it affects people's mood.

Dr. Ron Hunninghake: And another big factor that affects mood is sleep. And some of the most surprising new research is that if you take your vitamin D close to bedtime, it can actually help you get a better night's sleep.

Mike Shaw: And boy, is that worth a lot.

Dr. Ron Hunninghake: I hear so many people as a result of the pandemic and all the bad news and the disruption and chaos of work life and school life, they're not sleeping very well. And so, and I really don't like to use sleeping pills. There's those are addictive. And so use your vitamin D3 K2 close to bedtime and see if it helps you with your sleep.

Mike Shaw: Yeah. D3, it's a supercharger of the immune system, and anything that's trying to invade us. If we have a better military force, less likely that we're going to be invaded and a simple way to help support that is maintaining therapeutic levels of D3.

Dr. Ron Hunninghake: So I think really we've hit most of the key areas though, as I mentioned, this vitamin D Wiki website has 125 different conditions that vitamin D can help people with. And there are links to all the research papers that verify that. So it's just not us talking like we're excited about something new. This has been around, but what we're seeing is that it's a very important regulator.

Dr. Ron Hunninghake: And just probably just to close out the show today, in preparation for this, I was just looking how vitamin D regulates the intercellular functioning of our cells. So genetically speaking, we are going to be better able to respond to adverse conditions within our life, stress, infection, inflammation, cancerous activities, toxicity, all of this can be assisted. We can be assisted in preventing the dire consequences if we maintain good vitamin D levels.

Dr. Ron Hunninghake: So I know Riordan Clinic, we're really known for all of our research on vitamin C, but my gosh, when you start talking about vitamin D, it's right up there with vitamin C.

Mike Shaw: It's a formidable warrior in the defense against being invaded and insult, whether it's viral, bacterial, autoimmune, inflammatory, and it's so simple.

Dr. Ron Hunninghake: It's so simple. It's one a day. It's not expensive. It's safe, especially when you use it with vitamin K2. Anyone can go to their doctor and ask to get their level measured. It's something that you have control over on your own. And it's a highly effective way to maintain real health. And I think with that, thank you, Mike, for really a stimulating discussion of how vitamin D3, especially with K2, can be great for your overall health and wellbeing.

Mike Shaw: It's always enjoyable, and especially with such a dynamic, impressive topic.

Dr. Ron Hunninghake: You bet. Thank you everyone for listening, and we'll be back.

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