

Vitamin D and Good Health

by Anita Kugelstadt

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I come from Canada and now live in the UK. The two places have at least one thing in common: a lack of sunshine. And so a recent article about Swedish doctors pointing to a possible link between Vitamin D deficiency and autism (tinyurl.com/5rjdb7) caught my eye.

The Swedish doctors are certainly not the first to point out the significance of vitamin D to our health. More than sixty years ago, Dr. Weston A. Price in his landmark book *Nutrition and Physical Degeneration*, pointed out that the isolated, traditional cultures he studied had more than 10 times the level of dietary fat-soluble vitamins (like A and D) compared to the standard American diet of his time. Even more telling, Price noticed the marked and fairly swift decline in health in people whose traditional diet had been replaced by a more modern diet—this was especially true of the children born to these people. Dr. John Cannell, Executive Director of the Vitamin D Council, connects vitamin D deficiency to not only autism, but depression, cancer, mental illness, and a variety of other problems that seem to plague our modern society.

Vitamin D is created by our body as a result of being in the sunshine (specifically, the ultraviolet-B wavelength). In our modern world, we spend very little time outdoors compared to what was normal even twenty years ago. Furthermore, we have been taught to fear the sun, and parents receive dire and repeated warnings about protecting our children from sun exposure. People whose ancestors come from very sunny climates (like the Somali people living in Sweden who are being studied by the doctors mentioned above) are even more at risk for Vitamin D deficiency when they move to less sunny places. The sun shining alone, though, is not enough to produce Vitamin D. Because the amount of ultraviolet-B wavelength can vary as the result of many factors, it is impossible, for example, to create vitamin D for six months of the year in the city where I was born—Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Something similar may be true for the UK, as there have been many concerns raised here by experts who study this: maternal vitamin D levels and type 1 diabetes in children; rickets among Asian children living in England; and vitamin D deficiency in the elderly.

Because our bodies cannot always get enough vitamin D from the sun, it can also be ingested. As was pointed out in Price's work, unlike traditional diets, modern diets tend not to include vitamin D rich foods. How many of us eat organ meat and oily fish (let alone insects!) on a regular basis? Furthermore, the vitamin D we could get from foods we may find more palatable, like egg yolk or milk, is often lacking because we do things like raise our chickens indoors (where they cannot manufacture the D that would end up in their egg yolk) or pasteurize milk (and replace the natural D3 with synthetic D2, which behaves differently in our body).

Many parents of children with ASD have known for a long time that supplementing with cod liver oil proves beneficial to their children's health. Cod liver oil contains vitamin D, along with vitamin A and omega 3 fatty acids. More recently, a number of parents have seen much success on what many call the Vitamin K protocol, which uses, among other nutritional supplements, extra Vitamin D3. I know of many parents who have seen improvements in their children by adding D3 into their supplementation routine, on top of the D that a child would receive in cod liver oil. My own son is one of these children. In fact, only after adding extra D3 to my son's supplementation was he finally able to tan normally.

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Because vitamin D is a fat soluble vitamin, the body can store it. Theoretically, this means that levels of Vitamin D could reach toxicity. For this reason, it is very important to approach supplementation wisely and armed with knowledge. Below, you will find a number of resources that can help you better understand vitamin D and the role it may play in your child's health.

<http://www.westonaprice.org/basicnutrition/vitamin-d-safety.html> An excellent and comprehensive article on Vitamin D, by Chris Masterjohn of the Weston A Price Foundation.

<http://www.vitamindcouncil.org/health/autism/index.html> A huge resource where Dr. Cannell and other medical professionals examine Vitamin D, and question traditional medical wisdom on sufficient levels. This website has links to the latest research in Vitamin D.

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/VitaminK/> A support group for parents interested in exploring the use of fat soluble vitamins, including D, as supplements.

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