

## Lack of Vitamin D Doubles Use of Narcotic Pain Medicine

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Submitted by Kathleen Blanchard RN on Mar 21st, 2009



A new study from Mayo Clinic suggests that narcotic pain medicine use can be cut in half in chronic pain sufferers by checking for adequate levels of vitamin D. Chronic pain is a difficult problem to treat, and the study hopes to lend insight into

chronic pain management.

The study showed that people who did not have adequate levels of vitamin D required more narcotic pain medication compared to those with sufficient levels of vitamin D. Chronic pain sufferers took twice as much pain medication when vitamin D levels were low.

Other consequences found in the study from too little vitamin D included increased body mass index (BMI) among those with decreasing levels of vitamin D. Health perceptions and level of function was also found to be lower in the presence of low levels of vitamin D. Those without enough vitamin D also reported poorer perceptions of overall health.

Michael Turner, M.D., a physical medicine and rehabilitation physician at Mayo Clinic and lead author of the study says, "This is an important finding as we continue to investigate the causes of chronic pain. Vitamin D is known to promote both bone and muscle strength. Conversely, deficiency is an under-recognized source of diffuse pain and impaired neuromuscular functioning. By recognizing it, physicians can significantly improve their patients' pain, function and quality of life."

The study authors suggest that anyone suffering from chronic pain should have their levels of vitamin D checked. They also suggest that anyone with fibromyalgia or diffuse pain on muscle palpation may be suffering from low levels of vitamin D.

Lack of sunshine, obesity, and dark skin pigment are risk factors for vitamin D deficiency. A simple blood test can check vitamin D levels. The good news is correcting vitamin D deficiency is inexpensive and simple. Vitamin D supplements are available at any drugstore.

Vitamin D is important for reducing inflammation, and is now linked to double the use of narcotic medication among those suffering from chronic pain.

Physicians are encouraged to consider checking vitamin D levels in anyone at high risk, or complaining of diffuse pain, a symptom of vitamin D deficiency. Chronic pain is a leading cause of disability in the United States.

The study shows that a simple blood test for vitamin D levels may identify a missed source of chronic pain, and help chronic pain sufferers limit narcotic use by ensuring adequate levels of Vitamin D.

