What's your vitamin D IQ?

Knowing how to protect Seattle women from the regions deadliest diseases is the best way to ensure a long and healthful life. And how do you do that? Optimal levels of vitamin D will provide you an umbrella of healthcare protection and substantially decreases your risk for being diagnosed with breast cancer, ovarian cancer, MS or depression, not to mention its immune enhancing qualities to help you avoid seasonal colds and flu.

And with winter just around the corner we all need to supplement with an adequate dose of vitamin D as our blood levels are dropping as I write. And why is that? We've now entered our vitamin D winter.

If you haven't heard of a vitamin D winter and want to know more about how to protect your health, take this little quiz and find out the top 10 how's and why's of vitamin D.

1. The body of a healthy adult will use _____ IU of vitamin D each day. (a) 400 IU (b) 600 IU (c) 2,000 IU (d) 5,000 IU
    a. 5,000 IU
2. A *vitamin D winter* refers to the winter season (T/F).
    a. False. The vitamin D winter is related to latitude and is determined by the distance the sun must travel through the atmosphere before reaching the ground (and your skin).
3. The Northwest is home to the highest rates of breast cancer, MS and depression. (T/F)
    a. True. Our latitude and dense cloud cover is why most women are vitamin D deficient; putting them at very high risk for cancers and auto-immune diseases.
4. Which age group is at highest risk for vitamin D deficiency? (a) breast fed babies, (b) teenagers, (c) adults, (d) elderly
    a. a and d. Babies are completely dependent on vitamin D from breast milk. If the mother is vitamin D deficient she will not provide enough to her child. Elderly individuals are also at high risk as aged skin has less ability to synthesize vitamin D.
5. It takes about 10-15 minutes of exposure to noon-time sun to get my daily dose of vitamin D. (T/F/It depends)
    a. It depends. If your skin tone is light it will typically take you 10-20 minutes, if you skin type is medium to dark it could take you up 3 hours to synthesize the same amount.
6. Vitamin D will wash off my skin if I shower too soon after being in the sun. (T/F)
    a. True. Pre-vitamin D is synthesized in your skin and is found in the oil glands. If you shower before the pre-vitamin D has been absorbed and converted to vitamin D, it will wash off and your vitamin D levels will not rise. The absorption process takes a few hours.
7. Latest research has the new LOW for the vitamin D blood level at: (a) 30 ng/ml (b) 40 nm/ml, (c) 50 ng/ml, or (d) 60 ng/ml
    a. c. Having a blood level of 25(OH)D (the blood test for vitamin D) over 50ng/ml will kick in the powerful benefits of activated vitamin D. These benefits include reducing blood pressure, reducing inflammation, boosting immune system, balancing blood sugar, improving bone health, protection from cancer and viruses .
8. Parents who put sunscreen on their children whenever they are outdoors are putting them at risk for life threatening diseases. (T/F)

    a. True. If you're not providing your children an adequate supplemental dose of vitamin D, keeping them away from sunlight puts them at risk for a number of childhood illnesses. In the wintertime In fact, the practice of slathering sunscreen on children corresponds directly with the dramatic rise in childhood diseases of autism and diabetes.
9. Survival rates from cancer related surgery are highest in the fall. (T/F)
    a. True. Survival rates for cancer related surgery is directly correlated to vitamin D levels and season of diagnosis. Vitamin D levels are typically highest in the fall after summertime sun and lowest in the spring after the long winter.
10. Optimal levels of activated vitamin D can halt tumor growth. (T/F)
    a. True. Optimal blood levels of vitamin D can halt tumor growth AND reduce tumor size.

If you knew the answers to more than half of these questions congratulations! Having knowledge about how to raise and keep your vitamin D levels optimal is paramount for staying healthy.

But knowledge alone can't keep you healthy. Especially for women in the PNW, being committed to regular supplementation and sunlight exposure (when available) is the best way to avoid developing the cancers and auto-immune diseases which plague our region. And if you're one of many who've been diagnosed, by raising your vitamin D levels over 80ng/ml, you will be harnessing the powerful benefits that come with optimal vitamin D levels.

You may be wondering how one little vitamin can have such a broad and powerful effect in the body. The answer is that vitamin D is not really a vitamin at all. Once converted to the activated form in the body, vitamin D becomes the most powerful hormone in the human body, acting on over 2,000 genes – turning some on and others off to bring the body into a healthful state. Unfortunately, without levels over 50 ng/ml in the body, you don't have access to the powerful benefits of vitamin D.

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