



SELF

STUDY OF
ENVIRONMENT,
LIFESTYLE & FIBROIDS

1-877-692-SELF (7353)

www.DetroitSELF.org

Fall 2012

Dear SELF Participant,

I hope you had a great summer. As busy as your life may be, I really appreciate the time and effort you dedicate to participating in SELF: the Study of Environment, Lifestyle & Fibroids. Your contribution today will make a difference for generations of women to come.

In this newsletter, we focus on vitamin D and its effects on health. We also include study updates and reminders of important upcoming activities.

Thank you for your continued participation.

Sincerely,

Dr. Donna Baird
SELF Principal Investigator

Study Update

- We have almost reached our goal of enrolling 1600 women into the study
- More than 3100 calls received
- Almost 1500 clinic visits completed

Reminders

- Please remember to complete all study activities and return all required paperwork.
- Let us know if any contact information changes for you or your secondary contacts.

Any Questions?

Call us at

1-877-692-SELF (7353)

or send an email to

info@DetroitSELF.org



Why are you taking a picture of my skin when I come for my enrollment visit?

SELF is particularly interested in the melanin content of your skin because that affects how much vitamin D you make. We use a spectrophotometer to measure 3 different aspects of skin coloration: brightness, degree of yellowness, and degree of redness. Brightness gives an estimate of the melanin. Women with low brightness will need to spend more time in the sun in order to make adequate vitamin D.

Skin color measures are used in other health research as well. For example, a recent study showed that when women ate more fruits and vegetables, their skin yellowness and redness measurements went up. Colored plant chemicals, such as carotene, are absorbed from the gut and transported to the skin to keep it healthy.

Vitamin D



What Does Vitamin D Do In The Body?

Vitamin D is converted to its biologically active form by the liver and kidney. The active form affects many biological processes including regulating calcium for bones, influencing tissue growth, fighting infection, and maintaining immune function.

Vitamin D and Uterine Fibroids

Treatment with the Biologically Active Form of Vitamin D Shrinks Uterine Leiomyoma Tumors in the Eker Rat Model (Reported recently in *NIH NEWS*)

The Eker rat develops fibroids as it ages, so it is used by researchers to investigate possible fibroid treatments. Three weeks of continuous treatment with the active form of vitamin D shrank the rat's fibroid tumors. A study of women, aged 35-49, in the Washington, DC, area also suggests that vitamin D may be important. In that study led by Dr. Donna Baird, principal investigator for SELF, women with sufficient levels of vitamin D were less likely to have fibroids than women with low levels. SELF asks you questions about vitamin D supplements and time outside to learn more about your vitamin D status.

Vitamin D and Health Conditions

Researchers and doctors are actively studying vitamin D's role in...

Osteoporosis (bone thinning, especially common in postmenopausal women)	Vitamin D regulates how much calcium gets absorbed from the gut and helps prevent bone loss.
Autoimmune disease	Vitamin D is an important vitamin for a healthy functioning immune system. Inadequate vitamin D may increase risk for several autoimmune diseases such as lupus, multiple sclerosis, and rheumatoid arthritis.
Infections	Vitamin D reduces the risk of tuberculosis and possibly other infections.
Mood disorders	Vitamin D is thought to play a role in winter depression (seasonal affective disorder or SAD). It may influence other depression/anxiety conditions and schizophrenia, but needs further study.
Breast and colon cancers	Ongoing research suggests that vitamin D may help prevent these cancers and possibly others.
Preterm birth and other pregnancy problems	There is ongoing research suggesting vitamin D is important for healthy pregnancies.

Rickets is Back

Infants with rickets have soft bones that develop abnormally. In the 1920s, researchers discovered that rickets could be prevented with cod liver oil. Others learned that sunlight also prevented rickets. What could sunlight and cod liver oil have in common? It is vitamin D! Sunlight causes a chemical reaction in skin that produces vitamin D, and fish oil is one of the few food products that is naturally high in vitamin D. Rickets nearly disappeared in the United States after they began fortifying milk with vitamin D, but now vitamin D deficiency is increasing and rickets is reappearing. Detroit had 58 cases between 1995 and 2005. Nearly all were breastfed babies. Breast milk tends to be low in vitamin D if a mom's vitamin D level is on the low side, so it is now recommended that breastfed babies be given vitamin D supplements. Baby formula is fortified with vitamin D.

Vitamin D Deficiency and African American Women

African Americans are more likely to be at risk for vitamin D deficiency because of darker skin and higher rates of overweight/obesity as compared to other racial/ethnic groups. **More sunshine time is needed.**

How Much Vitamin D Do I Need?



Presently there is no consensus on the optimal dose. Most experts agree that adults who rely on supplements need at least 800-1000 IU per day to maintain their vitamin D levels. Some say 2000 IU per day or more is necessary. **People with severe deficiency may need prescription vitamin D for several months.**

Increasing Vitamin D Levels

Sunlight: Years ago, people spent a lot more time outside. This allowed them to make sufficient vitamin D. Now, with urban living, many people spend all day inside. Many factors influence how much time in the sun you need to make adequate vitamin D:

- **Skin color**—Darker skin is less efficient at making vitamin D.
- **Sunscreen**—The use of sunscreen blocks production of vitamin D in the skin.
- **Time of day**—Only ultraviolet B (UVB) sunlight produces vitamin D in your skin. These light rays reach the skin layer that produces vitamin D only when the sun is fairly high in the sky.
- **Obesity**—Studies show that as body fat increases, vitamin D levels in blood decrease.
- **Location, climate, and air pollution**—The further you are from the equator the less ultraviolet B exposure you get. Detroit is further away from the equator than Florida, thus people who live in Detroit tend to get less sun exposure. In addition, factors such as pollution and cloud coverage can reduce your ultraviolet B exposure by as much as 60%.
- **Season**—During the months of November to February in many places including Detroit, the sun stays low in the sky all day. It is impossible to get enough skin exposure to make adequate vitamin D.

Food: Most people get less than 10% of their vitamin D from food even with food fortification (process of adding essential vitamins to food). The foods with the highest levels of vitamin D include fatty fish like salmon and fortified products like milk, orange juice, and cereals. Cod liver oil is a very good source of vitamin D.

Supplements: Multivitamins usually include 400 IU of Vitamin D. Vitamin D supplements usually come in doses from 400 – 2000 IU.

Things to Remember

- **Get outdoors** when the sun is high in the sky.
- **Your children** need vitamin D too—from sunshine and/or supplements.

Thanks for the Kudos!

What SELF Participants are saying...

"Impressed by the level of organization and efficiency of the entire visit. I really appreciated the level of professionalism all 3 ladies expressed. They reviewed each procedure thoroughly to ensure I had no concerns. This was the best clinic experience I have ever had. Thank you all."

"Wonderful staff, very pleasant! Debbie W. and Melanie (sonographer) were both amazing and super nice."

"My interviewer made sure I understood each and every question..."

"Everyone I've encountered throughout the experience, whether in person or over the telephone, have been extremely professional, pleasant and accommodating. I am happy I decided to join the study and hopefully I can contribute to the cause."

"I'm happy to be a part of this SELF study. You are all doing wonderful things. Thank you."

"They were very professional at the clinic visit. The phone interview was right on time and I am happy to be a part of the SELF program."

"It's good to participate in something that could possibly help other people."



It's been over a year; when is my next clinic visit? What should I expect during follow-up?

Starting in October 2012, we will begin writing and calling participants about scheduling their first follow-up activities. During each follow-up, participants will be asked to complete an interview, surveys, and a clinic visit.

LET'S STAY IN TOUCH!

Please call us at 1-877-692-SELF (7353) if your phone numbers, mailing address or email address changes.



SELF

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED