

'Let the sunshine in' to protect your heart this winter

November 17 2008

The temperature might not be the only thing plummeting this winter. Many people also will experience a decrease in their vitamin D levels, which can play a role in heart disease, according to a new review article in *Circulation*.

Vitamin D deficiency results in part from reduced exposure to sunlight, which is common during cold weather months when days are shorter and more time is spent indoors.

"Chronic vitamin D deficiency may be a culprit in heart disease, high blood pressure and metabolic syndrome," said Sue Penckofer, PhD, RN, study author and professor, Marcella Niehoff School of Nursing, Loyola University Chicago.

The review article cited a number of studies that linked vitamin D deficiency to heart disease. These studies found rates of severe disease or death may be 30 to 50 percent higher among sun-deprived individuals with heart disease.

Penckofer and colleagues concluded that diet alone is not sufficient to manage vitamin D levels. Treatment options to correct this level, such as vitamin D2 or D3, may decrease the risk of severe disease or death from cardiovascular disorders. The preferred range in the body is 30 - 60 ng/mL of 25(OH) vitamin D.

"Most physicians do not routinely test for vitamin D deficiency," said

Penckofer. "However, most experts would agree that adults at risk for heart disease and others who experience fatigue joint pain or depression should have their vitamin D levels measured."

Source: Loyola University

Citation: 'Let the sunshine in' to protect your heart this winter (2008, November 17) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2008-11-sunshine-heart-winter.html>

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