

Vitamin D deficiency in infants and nursing mothers carries long-term disease risks

December 16 2008

New Rochelle, NY, December 16, 2008—Once believed to be important only for bone health, vitamin D is now seen as having a critical function in maintaining the immune system throughout life. The newly recognized disease risks associated with vitamin D deficiency are clearly documented in a report in the December issue (Volume 3, Number 4) of *Breastfeeding Medicine*, a peer-reviewed journal published by Mary Ann Liebert, Inc., and the official journal of the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine.

Vitamin D deficiency is common across populations and particularly among people with darker skin. Nutritional rickets among nursing infants whose mothers have insufficient levels of vitamin D is an increasingly common, yet preventable disorder.

Carol Wagner, MD, Sarah Taylor, MD, and Bruce Hollis, PhD, from the Department of Pediatrics, Medical University of South Carolina (Charleston), emphasize the need for clinical studies to determine the dose of vitamin D needed to achieve adequate vitamin D levels in breastfeeding mothers and their infants without toxicity.

In a paper entitled, "Does Vitamin D Make the World Go 'Round'?" the authors point out that vitamin D is now viewed not simply as a vitamin with a role in promoting bone health, but as a complex hormone that helps to regulate immune system function. Long-term vitamin D deficiency has been linked to immune disorders such as multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, type I diabetes, and cancer.

"Vitamin D is a hormone not a vitamin and it is not just for kids anymore," writes Ruth A. Lawrence, MD, Editor-in-Chief of *Breastfeeding Medicine*, from the Department of Pediatrics, University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry, in an accompanying editorial. "Perhaps the most startling information is that adults are commonly deficient in modern society. Vitamin D is now recognized as a pivotal hormone in the human immune system, a role far beyond the prevention of rickets, as pointed out in the article by Wagner et al in this month's issue of *Breastfeeding Medicine*."

The paper is available free online at www.liebertpub.com/bfm

Source: Mary Ann Liebert, Inc.

Citation: Vitamin D deficiency in infants and nursing mothers carries long-term disease risks (2008, December 16) retrieved 10 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2008-12-vitamin-d-deficiency-infants-nursing.html>

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