

Low vitamin D linked to the metabolic syndrome in elderly people

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A new study adds to the mounting evidence that older adults commonly have low vitamin D levels and that vitamin D inadequacy may be a risk factor for the metabolic syndrome, a condition that affects one in four adults. The results were presented at The Endocrine Society's 92nd Annual Meeting in San Diego.

"Because the [metabolic syndrome](#) increases the risk of diabetes and cardiovascular disease, an adequate vitamin D level in the body might be important in the prevention of these diseases," said study co-author Marelise Eekhoff, MD, PhD, of VU University Medical Center, Amsterdam.

The researchers found a 48 percent prevalence of [vitamin D deficiency](#). The study consisted of a representative sample of the older Dutch population: nearly 1,300 white men and women ages 65 and older.

Nearly 37 percent of the total sample had the metabolic syndrome, a clustering of [high blood pressure](#), abdominal obesity, abnormal cholesterol profile and high blood sugar.

Subjects with blood levels of vitamin D (serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D) lower than 50 nanomoles per liter, considered vitamin D insufficiency, were likelier to have the metabolic syndrome than those whose vitamin D levels exceeded 50. That increased risk especially stemmed from the presence of two risk factors for the metabolic syndrome: low HDL, or "good" cholesterol, and a large waistline.

There was no difference in risk between men and women, the authors noted.

The study included subjects who were participating in the Longitudinal Aging Study Amsterdam. Although the data were from 1995 and 1996, Eekhoff said they expect that vitamin D inadequacy remains prevalent among whites in the Netherlands.

Using follow-up data from 2009, the researchers plan to study how many of the subjects with low vitamin D levels developed diabetes.

"It is important to investigate the exact role of vitamin D in diabetes to find new and maybe easy ways to prevent it and cardiovascular disease," Eekhoff said.

Provided by The Endocrine Society

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