

Vitamin D deficiency might be tied to erectile dysfunction

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Men with low levels of 'sunshine vitamin' more likely to be impotent, study suggests.

(HealthDay)—Low levels of vitamin D may be associated with erectile dysfunction, a new study suggests.

Researchers analyzed data from more than 3,400 American men, age 20 and older, who did not have heart disease. Thirty percent were vitamin D deficient, which means their levels of the "sunshine vitamin" were below 20 nanograms per milliliter of blood. And 16 percent had erectile dysfunction.

Vitamin D deficiency was present in 35 percent of men with erectile dysfunction, compared with 29 percent of those without erectile dysfunction, the study found.

"Vitamin D deficiency is easy to screen for and simple to correct with lifestyle changes that include exercise, dietary changes, [vitamin supplementation](#) and modest sunlight exposure," study lead investigator Dr. Erin Michos, an associate professor of medicine at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, said in a university news release.

The researchers concluded that men with vitamin D deficiency were 32 percent more likely to be impotent than those with sufficient vitamin D levels. This association held even after the study authors accounted for other factors associated with erectile dysfunction, such as drinking, smoking, diabetes, higher blood pressure, inflammation and certain medications.

The researchers emphasized that their findings are observational and don't prove cause and effect. They said more research is needed to determine if there's a direct link between low vitamin D levels and [erectile dysfunction](#). If that's the case, they said it could lead to new treatment approaches.

"Checking [vitamin](#) D levels may turn out to be a useful tool to gauge ED risk," Michos said. "The most relevant clinical question then becomes whether correcting the deficiency could reduce risk and help restore erectile function."

About 40 percent of [men](#) older than 40 and 70 percent of those older than 70 are unable to attain and maintain an erection, the researchers said. Vitamin D deficiency affects up to 40 percent of adult Americans, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The study was presented Tuesday at the American Heart Association's annual meeting in Orlando, Fla. Research presented at meetings should be considered preliminary until it's published in a peer-reviewed medical journal.

More information: The American Academy of Family Physicians has more about [erectile dysfunction](#).

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