

Lack of vitamin D can sideline college football players

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(HealthDay)—Nearly 60 percent of college football players have low

levels of vitamin D, a new study suggests.

That means they face a significantly higher risk for muscle strain and injury, the researchers said.

"We were interested in [vitamin D](#) in this population because it's been shown to play an important role in muscle function and strength, which is critical to the high-performance athlete," said study author Dr. Brian Rebolledo. He's an orthopedic surgeon at the Scripps Clinic in La Jolla, Calif.

"Most of the past research into the harmful effects of low vitamin D has focused on the elderly, but relatively few studies have examined this association in the elite athlete," Rebolledo said in a Scripps news release. "This study suggests that monitoring and treating low vitamin D may potentially be a simple way to help prevent certain muscle injuries."

Rebolledo noted, though, that "additional research needs to be done to see if boosting vitamin D levels leads to improved [muscle function](#) and fewer injuries."

The findings stem from an analysis that reviewed data on 214 [college football players](#) who'd taken part in the National Football League's so-called "scouting combine" in 2015.

Data included the players' vitamin D levels, injury history and number of games missed because of a lower extremity muscle strain or core [muscle injury](#).

The researchers determined that 59 percent of the players had below-normal vitamin D levels. More than half of those who did—56 percent—had sustained a relevant strain or [injury](#) during play.

That figure went up to 73 percent among those with "severely deficient" vitamin D levels.

By comparison, similar [strains](#) and injuries affected just 40 percent of players with normal vitamin D levels.

And among the 14 players who had missed at least one game as a result of such targeted strains or injuries, 86 percent had low vitamin D levels.

That said, vitamin D deficiency was not spread equally among all players. For instance, 70 percent of black players had low vitamin D, compared with 13 percent of white players.

No marked differences were found based on the positions the young men played on the field.

The research team noted that vitamin D deficiency is not uncommon, affecting nearly 42 percent of American adults. It results mostly from poor diet and not enough sun exposure.

The study was published online recently in *Arthroscopy: The Journal of Arthroscopic and Related Surgery*.

More information: Information on [vitamin D](#) is available from the U.S. Office of Dietary Supplements.

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