Press Release

Vitamin D deficiency highly prevalent among Indians

About 70% Indians highly deficient in the sunshine vitamin

New Delhi, 05 May 2017: According to recent studies, about 65% to 70% of Indians are deficient in the sunshine vitamin or Vitamin D, with another 15% being insufficient. Despite the fact that India is a country with abundant sunshine, Vitamin D deficiency is reaching epidemic proportions, warn experts. Vitamin D is not just a simple vitamin but a steroid hormone impacting virtually every cell in the body. It is essential for the absorption of calcium and for maintaining bone health, and our body synthesizes this vitamin on exposure to sunshine.

Vitamin D is one of most essential vitamins required by our body. Lack of sun exposure not only causes Vitamin D deficiency but can also make you SAD, literally. Seasonal Affect ive Disorder (SAD) happens mostly during monsoon and winter when sun exposure is at its minimum. It makes you feel low and lethargic.

Speaking about this, Padma Shri Awardee Dr K K Aggarwal, National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr RN Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA in a joint statement, said, "People today lead a very fast-paced, stressful, and unhealthy life. With long working hours, they have little or zero time for outdoor activities, which is one of the major reasons for the lack of Vitamin D in the body. Low levels of this vitamin can harm the bones and make them thin, brittle, soft, or misshapen. Apart from this, Vitamin D is essential for the heart, brain, immune function, and much more. A deficiency of this vitamin can lead to rickets, osteoporosis, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer, and other infections."

A study published in the Osteoporosis International and British Journal of Dermatology found that even after 30 minutes of exposure to sunlight everyday for 30 days both in summer and winter, the body could not process adequate Vitamin D. And this is where supplements for Vitamin D become necessary. While Vitamin D deficiency affects people of all ages and both genders, women are found to be more prone to this deficiency as compared to men. Thus, women especially breastfeeding mothers must be encouraged to take Vitamin D supplementation as it benefits both the mother and the child. Adequate sun exposure, as well as a balanced diet, can go a long way in
helping to maintain optimum Vitamin D levels. In addition to this, supplementation and food fortification are necessary.

Adding further, Dr Aggarwal, said, "Vitamin D is of two kinds. Vitamin D2 or Ergocalciferol is found in food items and Vitamin D3 or Cholecalciferol is manufactured in the body with the help of sunlight. Both are equally important. If we can get D2 from food, our body can produce Vitamin D3 even with a little exposure to the sun."

Some other sources of Vitamin D include the following.

- Cod liver oil: Obtained from the liver of the cod fish, cod liver oil is considered extremely healthy. Taken either in the capsule or oil form, it helps ease joint pains.
- Mushrooms: These are a great source of Vitamin D3 as also low in calorie. Thus, even those watching their weight can eat this.
- Salmon: Not only is salmon rich in D3 but also Omega 3 and protein.
- Sunflowers seeds: They have Vitamin D3 as also monounsaturated fats and protein.

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About IMA: Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 30 States and Union Territories. It has over 2, 60,000 doctors as its members through more than 1765 active local branches spread across the country.

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