Deficiency of Vitamin D can cause dementia over time

Many Indians are unaware that they are Vitamin D deficient

New Delhi, 28 November 2017: While the benefits of Vitamin D in reducing the risk of heart disease, multiple sclerosis, and even rheumatoid arthritis have been documented in various studies, a new study has found that deficiency of this Vitamin D can increase the risk of developing dementia. As per the study, people severely deficient in vitamin D were 122% more likely to develop dementia. Despite being a country that receives ample sunlight, about 65% to 70% Indians are deficient in this most essential vitamin.

Vitamin D is not a simple vitamin and impacts virtually every cell in the body. It is synthesized in the skin on exposure to sunshine and is needed to absorb calcium and for bone health. Low vitamin D levels are widely known to harm bones, leading them to become thin, brittle, soft or misshapen. However, it is equally important for the heart, brain, and immune function.

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, "Vitamin D deficiency is linked with metabolic syndrome, heart diseases, and also with fertility. Research now has indicated a possible link to dementia as well. In India, the sun is worshipped as part of various festivals. The month of Magha, Vaishakha, and Kartik are considered as months for Shahi Snans where one is supposed to worship sun early in the morning and eat calcium rich food whether it is Urad Ki Daal or sesame seeds. The Chhat pooja which takes place immediately after Diwali is also linked to sun worship. The Marghshirsha month immediately after the month of Kartik also involves worshipping sun. Karkitpurnima and Vaishakhpurnima are especially known for sun worshipping. The current vitamin D mantra is that 40 days in a year for at least 40 minutes, one should expose 40% of the body to the sunlight either after sunrise or just before sunset.”

Vitamin D2 ergocalciferol is found in food items and our body makes Vitamin D3 cholecalciferol in the presence of sunlight. While both are extremely important, if D2 can be obtained from food, even little exposure to sun can help the body produce D3.
Adding further, Dr Aggarwal, said, “There are several reasons for deficiency of vitamin D. Lack of food fortification policies and more commonly our sociocultural practices, ‘sun-fleeing’ behavior, are major factors contributing to deficiency of this ‘sunshine vitamin’ in India which has abundant sunshine. Many people are unaware that they are vitamin D deficient.”

The following foods are good sources of Vitamin D.

**Cod liver oil** This oil comes from the liver of the cod fish and is considered extremely healthy. It helps ease joint pains and can be taken in capsule form or oil form.

**Mushrooms** If you love mushrooms, you are covered. Dried shitake mushrooms are a brilliant source of Vitamin D3 as well as Vitamin B. It is low in calorie and can be consumed daily.

**Salmon** Salmon is another good source of D3, Omega 3 and protein.

**Sunflowers seeds** This seed not only have Vitamin D3 but also comes with 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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