

Can Vitamin D Protect You From Swine Flu? By Diane Hayden-Hixson

April 25, 2009: This swine flu business is pretty scary, especially since there isn't a vaccine for it yet, and probably won't be for at least four months. If you want to keep up on this- the CDC has set up a special website. It gets updated ~ every six hours. <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/investigation.htm>

In 1987, R. Edgar Hope-Simpson wrote: **A new concept of the epidemic process of influenza A virus.** In this 50 page review paper, Dr. Hope-Simpson proposed some unknown factor protected people from influenza during the summer. Today many scientists and members of the medical community postulate this unknown factor is vitamin D. Why? Vitamin D has profound effects on human immunity. When bacteria, viruses, and fungi invade your body, vitamin D activates the production of broad-spectrum antimicrobial peptides, peptides that quickly destroy the invading pathogen, including influenza virus. Vitamin D also prevents the immune system from releasing too many inflammatory cells, called chemokines and cytokines, into infected lung tissue.

The following websites each go into this hypothesis for vitamin D's protective effects in considerable detail (probably more than you want). [A word of caution: **Never buy D3 supplements on the internet.** Most cases of vitamin D overdose have occurred from supplements bought over the internet.]

The Vitamin D Newsletter Nov 2005 - Pascal's Wager and Pandemic Influenza:

<http://www.vitamindcouncil.org/newsletter/2005-nov.shtml>

Vitamin D for Flu – Influenza (2006)

<http://www.abacohealth.com/index.php/spec/Vitamin%20D%20for%20Flu>

My personal recommendations: (1) Spend 15-20 min outside, in a bathing suit, at noon, without any sunscreen, every day for a while. Vitamin D (made in your skin from UVB light) is the best available protection from swine flu (or any flu). When pandemics breakout in temperate climates, like Mexico City, air pollution (blocks UVB) and/or rainy seasons (too many days w/o sunlight) always co-exist.

If you can't do this, and on cloudy or rainy days consider taking 2,000-5,000 IU of vitamin D3 daily. [FYI: Studies consistently show vitamin D toxicity doesn't occur (except in the case of advanced kidney disease) unless you take 100,000 IU vitamin D3 for ~ 6mo, so ignore everything you've heard about vitamin D toxicity for these much lower doses. It just doesn't exist.]

(2) Get your vitamin D blood levels checked ASAP. Blood levels above 55 ng/mL (80-90 ng/mL preferred) are needed to optimize vitamin D's influenza preventative benefits. [Remember there are many vitamin D blood tests, all but one [**25-hydroxy-vitamin D** or **25(OH)D**] are wastes of time & money unless you have kidney disease. Make sure you ask for the 25(OH)D test.] See www.ucsfhealth.org/adult/adam/data/003569.html.

You don't have to schedule a doctor's appointment for this, just ask your doctor to "write a script" for the blood test. A home testing kit is also available. It's a bit pricey, but worth considering if you don't have a regular MD. The cheapest source is UC San Diego Medical School (\$40 for two tests), but you have to join a major international study to get this one (<http://www.grassrootshealth.net/d-action>). Another source is the Vitamin D Council ((\$65 for one test: <http://www.vitamindcouncil.org/>).

(3) Buy a bottle of 2,000 IU Vitamin D3, and start taking it (comes in pill & gel cap forms). I prefer the gel caps to pills (very tiny & easy to swallow). I also recommend going to Whole Foods & buying *Nordic Naturals OMEGA-3D*. A teaspoon (tsp) contains all the Omega-3 you need per day, plus 1,000 IU of D3. [Don't take more than a tsp, because too much Omega-3 (>4,000 mg) can thin your blood to the point you hemorrhage to death. (FYI: A tsp of Nordic Naturals has 1,750 mg of Omega-3, just the right amount to optimize health and minimize risk.)] Finally, vitamin D3 comes in anything from 200 IU to 2,500 IU. The 200 IU supplements typically cost as much as the 2,000 IU ones, so don't bother with anything but 2,000-2,500 IU supplements.]

Check out the UCSD You Tube videos on this site if you question my advice about vitamin D. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emjCzaHtSrg>.