Vitamin D Supplementation Helps Sufferers of Chronic Hives

By: David Gutierrez, Natural News

A simple, over-the-counter vitamin D supplement could provide dramatic relief for those suffering from chronic hives, according to a study conducted by researchers from the University of Nebraska Medical Center and published in the *Annals of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology* in February.

Chronic hives are an allergic skin condition resulting in red, itchy welts, sometimes accompanied by swelling. The hives may occur daily and are classified as chronic if they last for longer than six weeks. Some people suffer from chronic hives for years at a time. There is no known cure, and most known treatments are of limited effectiveness.

"Standard therapy is to control symptoms with antihistamines and other allergy medications," lead researcher Jill Poole said. "Some are costly and can pose substantial side effects."

Although the causes of chronic hives are not known, scientists believe that some sort of immune dysfunction, such as allergy or an autoimmune disorder, is involved.

Because many studies have shown that vitamin D plays a role in preventing or treating autoimmune disorders, researchers examined the effects of vitamin supplementation on 38 people who had suffered from severe hives for between five and 20 years. Some participants had previously tried drug treatments, while others had not. No participants with kidney disease or calcium disorders were included in the study.

Participants were assigned to take a daily pill consisting of a combination of one prescription and two over-the-counter allergy drugs, as well as a daily vitamin D3 supplement of either 600 IU or 4,000 IU.

Higher dose yields more relief

After a single week, participants in both group experienced a 33 percent decrease in the severity of their symptoms. After a total of three months, participants taking 600 IU of vitamin D daily experience no further improvement. Those taking 4,000 IU per day, however, experienced another 40 percent decrease in their symptoms.

"We consider the results in patients a significant improvement," Poole said. "This higher dosing of readily available vitamin D3 shows promise without adverse effects. Vitamin D3 could be considered a safe and potentially beneficial therapy.

"It was not a cure, but it showed benefit when added to anti-allergy medications. Patients taking the higher dose had less severe hives -- they didn't have as many hives and had a decrease in the number of days a week they had hives."

The researchers now hope to replicate the results in a larger study.

Vitamin D for immune health

Vitamin D is an essential nutrient produced by the body when the skin is exposed to sunlight. Although vitamin D can be found in certain food sources or taken in supplement form, the best and safest source is still sunlight. Light-skinned people can produce all the vitamin D they need from just 15 to 30 minutes per day of unprotected sun exposure to face and hands; the darker your skin, the more exposure you need.

Although scientists have long known that vitamin D plays an essential role in bone formation and health, recent research has shown that the vitamin also helps regulate the immune system and other essential processes. Higher vitamin D levels have been shown to lower the risk of autoimmune diseases, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer.

Research into the effect of vitamin D on autoimmune disorders is particularly promising, because these diseases are notoriously difficult to treat. In addition, treatments are often costly and can carry serious side effects.

It is now becoming widely accepted that higher vitamin D levels help protect against autoimmune disorders. Even more promisingly, recent studies have suggested that vitamin D can help treat such disorders, including rheumatoid arthritis and irritable bowel syndrome.

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