The ABCs of Melanin

Because of this pigment in the skin, getting a few Ds is also a vital part of day-to-day black health.

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Study findings are alarming. They say that vitamin D deficiency is prevalent among people with darker skin. Why? Because the high levels of melanin in black skin, which protect the body from potentially harmful ultraviolet rays, also drastically reduce African Americans' ability to produce the nutrient.

A nutritional powerhouse, vitamin D gets an A for its disease-fighting properties and its ability to promote the absorption of calcium, the essential bone-building mineral. This vitamin also guards against some of the most common life-threatening illnesses, such as heart disease and diabetes.

But experts suspect that low levels of vitamin D may be the reason why these health problems, along with hypertension, are more prevalent in black communities.

While everyone can get a sizable amount of D from fortified foods, the sun is hands down the best source of this vitamin. Why? Because the skin converts the sun's ultraviolet rays into vitamin D.

But dermatologists suggest that people of all races be cautious about sun exposure.

Unsure whether you're getting enough vitamin D? Talk to your doctor. He or she can give you a special blood test that will measure your nutrient levels.

And if you do need to boost your D intake, consider first adding more into your diet. Eat vitamin-fortified foods such as dairy, cereal and breads. Salmon, cod liver oil and tuna fish are also great sources of vitamin D.

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http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/article/melanin-vitamin-d-17926-9338