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## Vitamin D May Provide Relief From Chronic Back Pain, Report Says

*An extra daily dose of vitamin D can help to relieve chronic back pain, as well as other long-lasting bone, joint, and muscle aches. A new research report and brochure from Pain-Topics.org provides helpful information and guidance for practitioners and patients.*

Glenview, IL; June 2008 – Up to 8 out of 10 persons will have back pain in their lifetimes. In many cases, such pains are chronic – lasting more than 3 months – and there is no evidence of any injury, disease, or bone problem like a slipped disk. An extensive review of clinical research in a new report from *Pain Treatment Topics* found that help may be available from a surprising champion of pain relief – Vitamin D.

According to Stewart B. Leavitt, MA, PhD, editor of *Pain Treatment Topics* and author of the report, “our examination of the research, which included 22 clinical investigations of patients with pain, found that those with chronic back pain almost always had inadequate levels of vitamin D. When sufficient vitamin D supplementation was provided, their pain either vanished or was at least helped to a significant extent.”



The report, “**Vitamin D – A Neglected ‘Analgesic’ for Chronic Musculoskeletal Pain,**” which was peer-reviewed by a panel of 8 experts, includes the following important points:

- >> Vitamin D is essential for calcium absorption and bone health. Inadequate vitamin D intake can result in a softening of bone surfaces, or *osteomalacia*, that causes pain. The lower back seems to be particularly vulnerable to this effect.
  
- >> In one study of 360 patients with back pain, all of them were found to have inadequate levels of vitamin D. After taking vitamin D supplements for 3 months, symptoms were

improved in 95% of the patients. All of them with the most severe vitamin D deficiencies experienced back-pain relief.

- >> The currently recommended adequate intake of vitamin D – up to 600 IU per day – is outdated and too low. According to the research, most children and adults need at least 1000 IU per day, and persons with chronic back pain would benefit from 2000 IU or more per day of supplemental vitamin D<sub>3</sub> (also called *cholecalciferol*).
- >> Vitamin D supplements have a highly favorable safety profile. They interact with very few drugs or other agents, and are usually not harmful unless extremely high doses – such as 50,000 IU or more – are taken daily for an extended period of time.
- >> Vitamin D supplements are easy for patients to self-administer, are well tolerated, and typically cost as little as 7 to 10 cents per day.

Besides the comprehensive **\*Research Report** (50-pages, 170 references), there is available a shorter **\*Practitioner Briefing** (7-pages) that summarizes the report and provides guidance for healthcare providers. Additionally, a special **\*Patient Brochure** (6-pages) explains what vitamin D is, how it works, and how it may help in relieving pain.

**\*All 3 documents are available for free access at:**

<http://Pain-Topics.org/VitaminD>

In conclusion, Leavitt stresses that vitamin D should not be viewed as a cure for all back pain and in all patients. It also is not necessarily a replacement for other pain treatments. “While further research would be helpful,” he says, “current best evidence indicates that recommending supplemental vitamin D for patients with chronic back pain would do no harm and could do much good at little cost.”

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#### **Contact Information**

Stewart B. Leavitt, MA, PhD  
Publisher/Editor-in-Chief; *Pain Treatment Topics*  
202 Shermer Road; Glenview, IL 60025 USA  
Phone: 847-724-3091  
[Stew.Leavitt@Pain-Topics.org](mailto:Stew.Leavitt@Pain-Topics.org);  
<http://Pain-Topics.org>