Vitamin D… More Than A Ray of Sunshine for your Health!!!

What is Vitamin D?
D is both a vitamin and a hormone in our bodies. It acts to increase calcium and phosphorus absorption from the intestines. There are Vitamin D receptors on many other organs and cells in the body.

How do we get Vitamin D?
The primary ways we obtain Vitamin D are from sun exposure, Vitamin D rich foods, and from supplements.

Vitamin D deficiency… an epidemic?
Estimates suggest that 1 billion people worldwide have Vitamin D deficiency or insufficiency. Often this is related to just not getting enough sunshine. In order to get enough exposure to sufficient sunlight year round, you would have to live south of Los Angeles. In conjunction, very few foods are rich in or fortified with enough Vitamin D to meet the requirements for sufficiency.

Why should I worry if I don’t have bone problems?
In conjunction with maintaining good bone health and mineralization, Vitamin D intake has been associated with other medical conditions. Deficient levels have been associated with increased risk for many cancers, including colon, breast and prostate. Vitamin D deficiency is also seen more frequently in multiple sclerosis and diabetes. Fibromyalgia, chronic pain and depression may be related to Vitamin D deficiency.

What can you do to become sufficient in Vitamin D?
You can increase your own Vitamin D levels by:

Eating more vitamin D rich foods (fatty fish, mushrooms, egg yolks and fortified foods)
Ensuring optimal sunlight exposure between May and September (10- 15 minutes of exposure on arms and legs 3-4 times a week)
Taking Vitamin D3 800IU-2000IU daily with food

Testing for Vitamin D
The best way to determine your Vitamin D levels is to have a blood specimen drawn for 25 hydroxy Vitamin D. A deficiency is considered to be less than 30 ng/ml. Your target level is best determined by your doctor, and your levels should to be followed closely to ensure they are appropriate.

If you think you might be at risk for Vitamin D deficiency, see your doctor for a consultation and to have a level checked.