

Could vitamin D, a key milk nutrient, affect how you age?

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There is a new reason for the 76 million baby boomers to grab a glass of milk. Vitamin D, a key nutrient in milk, could have aging benefits linked to reduced inflammation, according to a new study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*.

In a genetic study of more than 2,100 female twin pairs ages 19-79, British and American researchers found that higher vitamin D levels were linked to improved genetic measures of lifelong aging and chronic stress. Using a genetic marker called leukocyte telomere length (LTL), they found those with the highest vitamin D levels had longer LTL, indicating lower levels of inflammation and body stress. The telomere difference between those with the highest and lowest vitamin D levels was equivalent to 5 years of aging.

Previous research has found that shortened LTL is linked to risk for heart disease and could be an indication of chronic inflammation – a key determinant in the biology of aging. While there are several lifestyle factors that affect telomere length (obesity, smoking and lack of physical activity), the researchers noted that boosting vitamin D levels is a simple change to affect this important marker.

Studies continue to link vitamin D to an array of health benefits, securing vitamin D's "super nutrient" status and providing even more reasons to get adequate amounts of this essential vitamin. Recent research suggests that beyond its well-established role in bone health, vitamin D also may help reduce the risk of certain cancers and autoimmune diseases, such as type 1 diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis and multiple sclerosis.

Milk is a primary source of calcium and vitamin D in the American diet. In fact, government reports indicate that more than 70 percent of the calcium in our nation's food supply comes from milk and milk products. Additionally, milk is one of the few

food sources of vitamin D, which is fast emerging as a "super nutrient."

The recommended three servings of low fat or fat-free milk provides 900 mg of calcium, 300 IU of vitamin D and 80 mg of magnesium daily.

Source: Weber Shandwick Worldwide

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