

Pockets of nutrient deficiency identified

By ACSH Staff — April 4, 2012

According to a [recent report](#) [1] from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), while only about 10 percent of Americans suffer from any nutritional deficiency, nearly one in ten women between the ages of 12 and 50 have low iron levels, and many others have such low iodine levels that they border on deficiency.

The latest study, which compared data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey from 1999 to 2002 and from 2003 to 2006, measured the concentrations of 58 nutrients and other compounds in the blood and urine of thousands of people.

Though the results on the whole were positive, there were some shortcomings, including an overall decline in iodine levels among the U.S. population. This drop can largely be explained by the fact that most people now obtain their dietary sodium from processed foods which contain no iodine and not from table salt, which has been iodized since the 1920s.

Iodine is essential to the production of thyroid hormones, and it is especially important that women of childbearing age consume appropriate quantities, since the nutrient is vital to a baby's normal brain development. In addition to table salt, iodine is also found in seafood, and in beans, potatoes, meat, and eggs.

The most prevalent deficiency in the study, however, was that of vitamin D. According to the report, almost one-third of African Americans and 12 percent of Hispanics have low levels of this vitamin. Though vitamin D is found in fatty fish and fortified dairy products, these sources alone are not enough to meet dietary standards. In fact, most vitamin D is obtained from sunlight. Bone health is closely dependent on vitamin D levels, particularly for caucasians, although the same standards for healthy levels of this vitamin may not be as applicable to blacks.

ACSH's Dr. Ruth Kava adds, While use of sunscreen can prevent production of vitamin D in the skin, health authorities recommend short exposures to sunlight before using screening compounds in order to circumvent this problem. For more information on vitamin D, see our publication [Summer Health & Safety Tips](#) [2].

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Links

[1] http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-500368_162-57408120/some-americans-are-not-getting-essential-nutrients/

[2] http://www.acsh.org/healthissues/newsID.1946/healthissue_detail.asp