



# Myasthenia Express

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## Myasthenia Gravis Manitoba Inc. Winnipeg, Manitoba

## Presidents Report by Diane S. Kowaliuk

Our next meeting will be held on  
**November 19, 2009.**

At this meeting we will have our annual elections. The phoning committee will be canvassing by phone prior to our meeting the vacant positions. Remember our chapter cannot function with only a few people doing all the work. If we all participate a little bit, it is not so taxing for just a few members. I ask the members for your support and assistance on these vacant positions.

Immediately following our annual elections, our **guest speaker** will be **Dr. Andrew J. Gomori, MD.** At our September meeting the support group compiled a list of questions and sent them to Dr. Gomori, he will do his research and provide a response at our meeting.

In December I realize everyone will be very busy with your

Christmas shopping and preparing food for the holiday season. But once again in early January we call upon our members for support and assistance for our bake sale which will be held January 23, 2010 at Garden City Mall. We are going to try and set up on Friday, January 22, so members can bring their baking either day. Once again I know our members will not let the executive down by providing the baking and working at the bake sale.

Due to the bake sale in January our Christmas party will have to be rescheduled to another month. Suggestions would be greatly appreciated.

The executive would like to thank all the members for the wonderful support and assistance you provided us in 2009. Great job!

I would like to give each and everyone of you a pat on the back.

## **Fall – To do list**

1. Flip your mattress to eliminate a groove from sleeping in the same spot; this is better for your spine.
2. Replace your emergency water supply.
3. Check your pantry for emergency food supplies (and make sure you have a non-electric can opener).
4. Clean out and check your car, including tire pressure (which changes at different temperatures).
5. Check you light bulbs and replace with energy efficient light bulbs so you have enough light for the winter.
6. Change your furnace filters monthly.
7. Change the batteries in your smoke detectors.
8. Shake the fire extinguishers regularly to keep the chemical from sticking to the bottom.
9. Change your antifreeze in your vehicle to winter antifreeze.

# **Osteoporosis**

## **Are You Getting Enough Vitamin D?**

Most people know that being exposed to the sun's rays can be harmful (it can increase the risk of skin cancer), but they may not know there's a risk of too little sun.

Sun exposure is actually beneficial when obtained in small doses-such as 15 minutes or less several times a week. The sun's ultraviolet rays actually trigger vitamin D synthesis in the skin. Vitamin D is important because it helps us absorb calcium from the digestive system for our bones.

The days are getting shorter as winter approaches, and people are less exposed to the sun. Even if they are getting sun exposure, the winter sun is too weak to be beneficial.

A vitamin D deficiency prevents new bone tissue from hardening, a condition known as rickets in children and osteomalacia in adults. It can also result in bone loss and causes muscle weakness, which creates an increased tendency to fall.

Research studies have also found that insufficient levels of vitamin D may also contribute to developing different types of cancer such as breast, colon and prostate cancer, as well as heart disease and diabetes.

Here's what you need to know about vitamin D:

- **What vitamin D is**

Vitamin D is a fat-soluble vitamin found in some foods and which can be made in your body after exposure to ultraviolet rays from the sun.

- **Why vitamin D is important**

Vitamin D helps the body maintain normal blood levels of calcium and phosphorus. It promotes calcium absorption and helps to form and maintain strong bones.

- **Who's at risk for a vitamin D deficiency?**

Breastfeeding infants-Human breast milk alone doesn't provide adequate vitamin D, and parents are advised to keep infants out of the sun. So the Academy of Pediatrics recommends a daily supplement of 400 international units (IU) of vitamin D per day beginning at age 6 months, unless they are weaned to receive at least 500 ml per day of vitamin D-fortified formula.

Older adults-The skin of adults aged 50 and older does not synthesize vitamin D efficiently and the kidney is less able to convert vitamin D to its active hormone form.

People with darker skin color-The melanin content is higher in people with darker skin, which reduces the skin's ability to produce vitamin D from sunlight.

People with fat malabsorption-Because vitamin D is a fat-soluble vitamin, people with a reduced ability to absorb dietary fat, such as those with Crohn's disease, cystic fibrosis, celiac disease or liver disease, or those who have had part or all of their stomach or intestines removed (as a result of gastric bypass surgery, for example), may not adequately absorb vitamin D.

People with limited sun exposure-Homebound individuals, people living in northern latitudes like New England and Alaska, and those who wear more protective clothing are at risk for vitamin D deficiency.

- **How much vitamin D do you need?**

The current recommendations are: from birth to age 50, people should get at least 200 IU of vitamin D a day. Adults 51–69 require 400 IU daily, and those over 70 require 600 IU. Many experts in the field recommend 1000 to 2000 IU per day and some patients need more.

The 'safe upper limit' for vitamin D is 2,000 IU per day, and higher levels may be needed for some people. Although there is a wide margin of safety, taking too much vitamin D can lead to toxicity, which through high blood calcium levels can cause nausea, vomiting, poor appetite, constipation, weakness and weight loss. It can also cause heart rhythm abnormalities and confusion."

- **Sources of vitamin D**

Exposure to the sun provides most people with their vitamin D requirement, because ultraviolet rays trigger synthesis in the skin.

However, the sun's rays are not strong enough in the winter and there are other ways to get vitamin D. There are some foods that contain vitamin D, such as egg yolks, sardines, mackerel, salmon, herring, fish liver oils, shrimp, chicken liver, oysters and fortified foods such as orange juice, milk and infant formula.

It's difficult to get your daily recommended amount from foods containing vitamin D, and most multivitamins only contain 400 IU of vitamin D, so most people will need an additional supplement.

### **Winter Dry Skin**

Winter is the season for dry skin and chapped lips because lower air temperatures and low humidity result in drier air. The dryness is made worse by forced, hot-air heating. The dry air causes skin to lose moisture and become itchy. As we age, winter dryness becomes worse because the natural oil layer in our skin (which protects it from losing moisture) is depleted. Frequent baths or showers further remove this protective oil layer, and the cycle of winter-dry skin continues.

The most common cause of itchiness (without the rash) is dry skin. If your skin is itchy for no obvious reason, try using a moisturizer. Moisturizers add a protective oil layer to your skin and decreases the amount of moisture lost to dry air. Some moisturizers feel greasier than others because they contain a lot of oil. These types stay on longer and are better for really dry skin, but tend to feel heavy and uncomfortable. Water-based moisturizers feel lighter on the skin but they don't stay on as long, nor do they provide the same degree of skin protection as the oilier types. Sometimes your doctor will prescribe a medication to help heal dry skin, but for the common winter itch here are some suggestions: Lotions are good for most parts of the body but creams are best for the really rough areas such as elbows, knees, hands and feet. Apply a moisturizer after bathing or showering. This helps keep the skin hydrated. It's often best to bathe or shower before going to bed. Cold dry air tends to cause the moisture on your skin to evaporate. Drink plenty of

water and avoid caffeinated beverages. Use a humidifier during the heating season. Wear gloves when washing dishes or cleaning. Don't lick chapped lips as this causes more fluid loss and more chapping. Try to wear gloves or mittens on your hands when outside in cold weather.

If these measures don't help after a week or two, or if you notice any red rashes or patches, schedule a visit with your healthcare professional.



The third edition of the book, *You, Me and Myasthenia Gravis*, by Deborah Cavel-Greant, is ready for sale. Contact Verna Kapkey at 204-586-6784 or [mginc@mts.net](mailto:mginc@mts.net)

Our drug alert card has been printed “Drugs that worsen the symptoms of MG,

If you have not received this card contact Verna at 1-204-586-6784

Myasthenia Gravis Manitoba Inc.

Membership Fees:

\$10.00 -- Family

\$ 5.00 -- Per Person

Please submit your fees or donation to:

Myasthenia Gravis Membership

Maureen Silk

614 Munroe Avenue

Winnipeg, Manitoba

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**Literature**

If you, or someone you know has Myasthenia Gravis and needs information on the illness, we do supply literature, in the form of previous articles, pamphlets, etc. for members and their families.

Contact, Verna Kapkey at 1-204-586-6784 or [mginc@mts.net](mailto:mginc@mts.net)

**Please note:**

This newsletter is intended to provide the reader with general information to be used solely for educational purposes, and that any medical views expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual author and do not reflect any official position of the Myasthenia Gravis Manitoba Inc. Chapter. Always consult your physician or health care professional for medical advice.