



SARCOIDOSIS AND CALCIUM AND VITAMIN D

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An increased level of calcium in the blood and/or urine is common in sarcoidosis. We see high blood calcium in 1 in 10 people with sarcoidosis.

Why is calcium and vitamin D important?

Calcium is essential for a healthy skeleton, but it is also important for nerve and muscle function. Calcium levels are regulated by vitamin D, which we produce in our skin using sun light, and obtain in our diet through foods like oily fish. Low levels of calcium and vitamin D can contribute towards thinning of the bones (osteopenia or osteoporosis) which becomes more common as we age. Medications used to treat sarcoidosis including steroids, affect the calcium metabolism and contribute to osteoporosis.

High levels of calcium in sarcoidosis

The inflammation in sarcoidosis increases the activity of an enzyme which converts inactive vitamin D to its active form. This is essential for the body's absorption and use of calcium. Too much active vitamin D can cause the body to absorb too much calcium, elevating the blood and urine calcium levels.

Symptoms:

- stomach pain
- constipation
- fatigue, depression and even confusion
- kidney stones and kidney damage (rare)

Preventing high calcium

For most people, calcium and vitamin D supplements are very safe, but for some people with sarcoid, there is a risk of supplements increasing blood levels of calcium and vitamin D. It is essential that you have your calcium in the serum and urine and vitamin D level measured before you start any supplements, and that these levels are monitored whilst you remain on therapy (usually with a blood test two months after starting therapy).