

IMA to lead pan-India drive on vitamin D deficiency

Campaign To Go On Till Next Year

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Pune: The widespread deficiency of vitamin D has prompted the Indian Medical Association (IMA) to start a two-year pan-India awareness campaign, which will conclude in December 2016.

The campaign named as 'Rise and Shine', which will be conducted in 128 cities, will be conducted through 1,700 branches of the IMA, including 2.5 lakh members. It also aims to provide essential soft skills training to all doctors on topics, including public speaking, managing patient records online, adapting to the new mobile app culture and how to break the news of death to a patient's family.

Neurosurgeon A Mar-

WHY THE INITIATIVE

- ▶ Though tropical countries like India has enough sunlight, the vitamin D deficiency has become widespread due to changed lifestyle and job profiles
- ▶ Vitamin D deficiency is rapidly gaining epidemic proportions yet it remains the most under-diagnosed and under-treated nutritional deficiency in the world
- ▶ It is easily preventable by getting more exposure in the sun, eating more dairy products and vitamin D-rich foods and taking supplements as prescribed by the doctor
- ▶ The IMA's 'Rise and Shine' campaign will raise awareness about vitamin D deficiency and address the skill gap that exists in the healthcare sector

thanda Pillai, national president of the IMA, said, "For the next two years, the IMA's Rise and Shine campaign will raise awareness about vitamin D deficiency and address the skill gap that exists in the healthcare sector."

"The widespread deficiency of vitamin D puts the onus on doctors to recognize common signs related to it which include tiredness, vague aches and pains. The doctors should spot these signs in their patients and should also

advise them the right diet plans and supplementation to cure it. In the long run, a national policy on vitamin D food fortification similar to that being practised in the US and some European countries is needed to uproot the problem," said Pillai.

Endocrinologists Sanjeev Bakshi and Varsha Jagtap said Indians, in particular, have a higher tendency to be vitamin D deficient than their western counterparts for several reasons, including their

tendency to shy away from the sun, spend long hours working in indoor working spaces, dependence on vehicles as modes of transport as opposed to walking and using bicycles and a predominantly vegetarian diet among others.

Lately, studies have revealed that in addition to the known skeletal effects of vitamin D deficiency, it can also have serious long-term impact on a person's health making them vulnerable to diseases like heart attacks, cognitive disorders, diabetes and cancer.

The typical dose of vitamin D supplementation in Indian adults is about 2,000 international units (IU) per day. Doses up to 4,000 IU daily are considered safe and do not require monitoring. "However, one must take supplementation in consultation with their doctor as an overdose of vitamin D can cause toxicity," said gynaecologist Avinash Bhutkar, IMA president, Pune branch.

