

Vit. a deficiency essay



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So many (mostly young children) contract and will die of this deficiency every day.

This disease is easily preventable and also easily curable if caught in the early stages. Over the past decade a major push for vitamin A deficiency awareness has taken place. But the vast majority of people stricken with this disease are living in the poorest of the poor areas so they have no money to pay for treatment and as previously mentioned have a lack of trust in western medicines. The fight has not been easy but it is a battle that needs to be fought.

Before diving into the symptoms and treatments for vitamin a deficiency, it would be best to gain some background information on vitamin a. Vitamin a is a fat soluble substance that also comes in the form of carotene. Carotene can be converted by our bodies into the vitamin a that we need. Since vitamins are classified in the group of essential nutrients, our bodies do not produce enough of them in order to keep us healthy. In that case we need to supplement them by the foods eaten. Foods such as animal liver (especially turkey), sweet potatoes, carrots, dark green leafy greens, squash, dried herbs, lettuce, apricots, and cantaloupe all provide generous amount of vitamin a (hilariousness's. Com).

The people who are in a continuous state of suffering from the deficiency disease do not have ample access to many of these foods. Our bodies can synthesize carotenes derived from plants and vegetable into vitamin a, via an enzyme reaction in the intestine. The most important of the carotenes to humans is beta-carotene. Beta-carotene is a type of pigment found in plants,

especially carrots and colorful vegetables (University of Maryland Medical Center).

If it were possible to have these vegetables grown in the parts of the world suffering the most from this deficiency it would be wiped out. But the soil conditions do not support these types of plants. And the people in these countries do not possess the wealth and resources to maintain a balanced diet or supplement the vitamins missing from their diet through medical sources.

When a person is not maintaining a healthy level of vitamin A in their system the symptoms will quickly begin to show. This first being night blindness. "Night blindness occurs because vitamin A deficiency reduces the amount of rhodopsin in the rods of the retina" (Lethal). Night blindness is exactly what the name implies. During the day the vision is normal but as the sun starts to set and the person's eye is subject to dim lighting conditions the vision becomes blurry. As the condition begins to worsen the blurriness becomes worse until vision is next to none in dim lights. If the deficiency is not treated in this stage it worsens and conjunctival Xerophthalmia develops. This term refers to the patches of dry spots that begin to appear on the eye.

"Patches of Xerophthalmia give the appearance of sand banks in a receding tide" (Lethal). Sometimes accompanying the conjunctival Xerophthalmia are Bitot's Spots (XSL B) which are usually triangular-shaped, raised whitish plaques that occur in both eyes" (Lethal). The deficiency will continue to worsen and result in corneal Xerophthalmia. This is drying of the surface of the cornea. As corneal Xerophthalmia persists the cornea will begin to soften and ulcers may

begin to form. Because vitamin a helps to strengthen the immune system at this stage in the disease the patient will be severely ill. Usually having developed Protein Energy Malnutrition (PEN), measles, tuberculosis, or dehydration. The best way to protect yourself from this disease is prevention.

But there are treatments available. The best treatment is always prevention. But when this is not possible early diagnosis is the next best thing. If no corneal involvement has occurred specific doses of vitamin a will be administered depending on your age and size.

This will cure any symptoms experienced but will wear off if a healthy level of vitamin a is not maintained. If corneal involvement has occurred antibiotic ointment should be applied six times daily to the infected areas. “ Night blindness ND conjunctivas Xeroxes are completely reversible and respond quickly to treatment.

.. (Lethal). Corneal ulcers can be treated but will leave scars. And the impact on the vision will be determined by how large the scares have become. Though vitamin a deficiency disease is horrible the “...

Fatality rate is often high because of accompanying PEN, and infections” (Lethal). Vitamin a deficiency lowers the strength of the immune system which makes your body more susceptible to many other diseases that can and will kill you. The best way to avoid all these is to at a healthy and balanced diet and/or take vitamin supplements.