
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health Services

B.C. ISSUES VITAMIN D TESTING PROTOCOL

VICTORIA – A new vitamin D testing protocol and patient guide will ensure British Columbians receive these tests only when required.

“A new protocol will provide doctors with information to make wise decisions based on clinical evidence and reduce unnecessary vitamin D tests,” said Health Services Minister Kevin Falcon. “As part of our innovation and change agenda, we are moving towards outcome-based decisions and guidelines that will put our health care dollars into appropriate, safe and effective services.”

Clinical evidence shows that routine vitamin D testing or screening is unnecessary except for patients with conditions such as renal failure, malabsorption syndromes, unexplained bone pain, unusual fractures, and other evidence of metabolic bone disorders. The guidelines continue to encourage doctors to refer patients to get tested when appropriate.

Over the last five years, vitamin D tests have increased ten-fold in B.C. In 2008/09, there were 22,748 vitamin D laboratory tests billed to MSP by B.C. physicians representing a cost of over \$2 million. To address this, representatives from the ministry and the BC Medical Association developed the new protocol that also reduced the laboratory MSP fee for vitamin D tests (from \$93.63 to \$61.50 per test). It is anticipated that physicians who follow the protocol will prescribe the test less frequently.

“Physicians will welcome a new protocol that helps guide them in their decision making,” said Dr Ian Gillespie, president of the BC Medical Association. “Developed with expert consultation looking at the best science available, protocols are intended to help physicians decide the best course of action for their patients while using health care resources wisely.”

B.C.’s Guidelines and Protocols Advisory Committee, comprised of physicians from the BCMA and representatives from the ministry, has joint responsibility for developing guidelines to support the effective use of medical services. To view all the clinical practice guidelines and protocols in British Columbia including the vitamin D protocol and patient guide, please visit <http://www.bcguidelines.ca/gpac/index.html>.

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