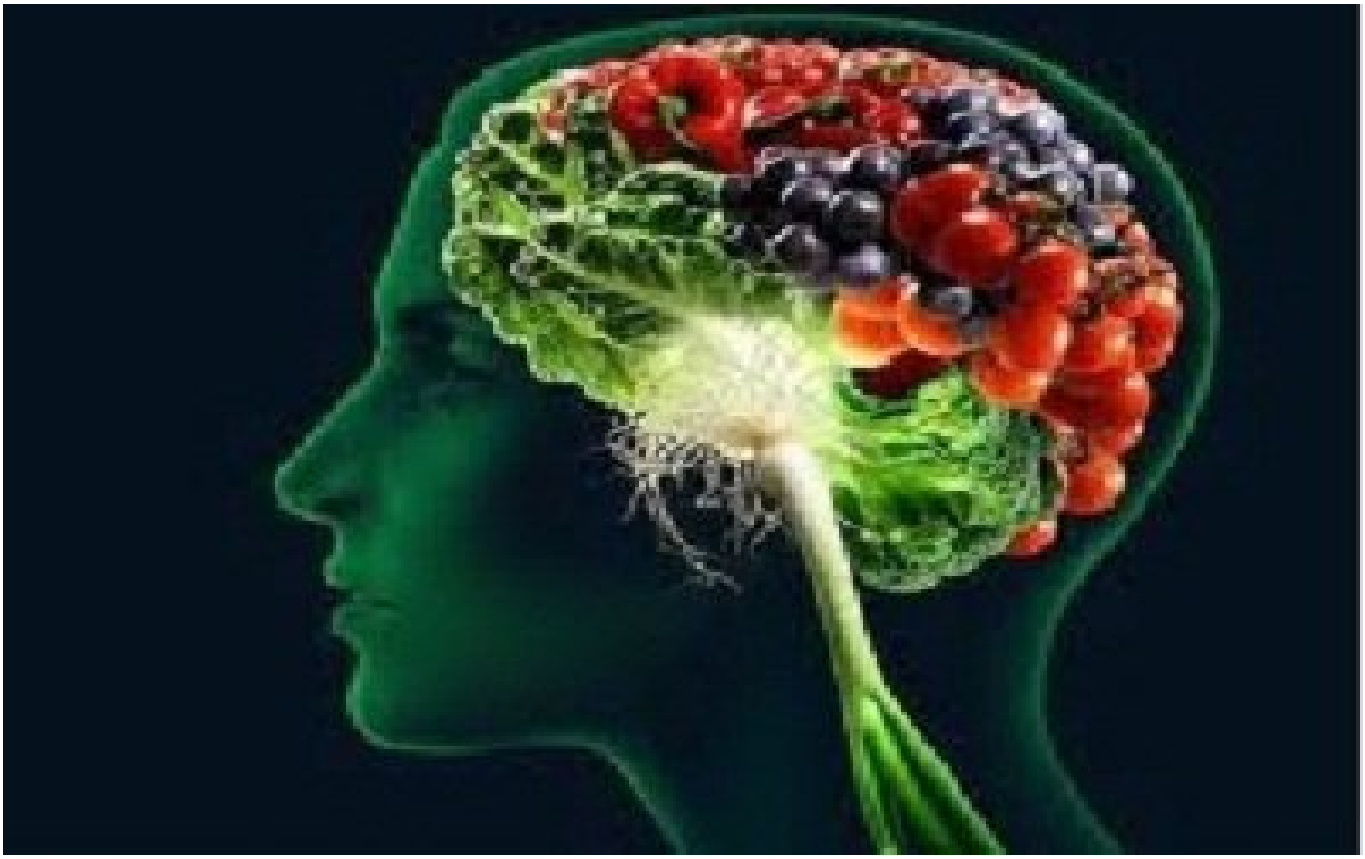
NEWS | RESEARCH

Vitamin D deficiency dangerous for brain

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The study shows that in addition to being essential for maintaining bone health, vitamin D serves important roles in other organs and tissue, including the brain. Published in Free Radical Biology and Medicine, the study showed that middle-aged rats that were fed a diet low in vitamin D for several months developed free radical damage to the brain, and many different brain proteins were damaged as identified by redox proteomics. These rats also showed a significant decrease in cognitive performance on tests of learning and memory.

"Given that vitamin D deficiency is especially widespread among the elderly, we investigated how during aging from middle-age to old-age how low vitamin D affected the oxidative status of the brain," said lead author on the paper Allan Butterfield, professor in the University of Kentucky’s Department of Chemistry, director of the Center of Membrane Sciences, faculty of Sanders-Brown Center on Aging, and director of the Free Radical Biology in Cancer Core of the Markey Cancer Center. “Adequate vitamin D serum levels are necessary to prevent free radical damage in brain and subsequent deleterious consequences."

Previously, low levels of vitamin D have been associated with Alzheimer’s disease, and it’s also been linked to the development of certain cancers and heart disease. In both the developed world and in areas of economic hardship where food intake is not always the most nutritious, vitamin D levels in humans are often low, particularly in the elderly population.

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