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# Stack on Sports

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## Blackhawks taking their vitamins

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Written by [contentmen](#) on 06/07/2010 12:49:31 PM

If the Chicago Blackhawks win the Stanley Cup this year, they might have Vitamin D to thank. And their source for it didn't even come from laying out in the sun.



The vitamin which is well-known to be absorbed through exposure to sunlight has been supplied to Blackhawks players by the team for roughly 18 months, according to Dr. John Cannell, Executive Director of Vitamin D council.

Dr. Cannell says the Blackhawks are the first professional sports franchise to diagnose and treat its players for Vitamin D deficiency. Cannell claims that the team is giving treatment to its players as is recommended by the American College of Sports Medicine. (The Blackhawks refused to confirm the testing on the grounds that they don't speak about player health.)

There are other benefits to the Blackhawks aside from no longer being deficient in Vitamin D, according to Dr. Cannell.

"What interests us is there is significant evidence that adequate treatment of Vitamin D deficiency will protect the players from a host of different diseases and conditions," Dr. Cannell says, later citing lower respiratory infections and repetitive use injuries as two areas which are better protected with a proper Vitamin D intake.

The body can produce Vitamin D but only if exposed to sunlight or artificial sunlight, as found in tanning beds. An appropriate amount of 7-Dehydrocholesterol, a cholesterol in the skin, is what is needed for the body to manufacture Vitamin D. Since hockey players typically participate in their sport indoors, they and other indoors athletes are at risk for Vitamin D deficiency.

Dr. Cannell stated that more hockey teams haven't begun testing for Vitamin D deficiency because there hasn't been much research on the subject until the last couple years. As teams find value in testing their players, he suspects more teams will take the Blackhawks' route. And they should.

Improved athletic performance could be one benefit from ensuring players aren't deficient in the vitamin. The Blackhawks are in the Stanley Cup Finals this season and made a Western Conference Finals appearance last season after five consecutive campaigns without a postseason showing.

More important than even on-ice success is the team taking medical care of its players. Whatever small investments teams can make in ensuring their players' health can go a long way toward getting the results they pay their players for in the first place.

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