

Mealtime Memo

Nutrition News You Can Use

VITAMIN D— IS IT THE MOST IMPORTANT NUTRIENT OF THE DECADE?

Washington's gray winter days can do more than put a damper on your spirits. A growing body of evidence suggests that lack of sunshine can raise your risk of cancer, increase susceptibility to heart attack, diabetes and other disorders, and at least partly account for the region's rate of multiple sclerosis, one of the highest in the nation.

The reason is vitamin D, an essential nutrient produced in abundance by skin exposed to the sun's rays. Once thought important mainly for strong bones, the so-called sunshine vitamin is now recognized as a key player throughout the body, including the immune system.

Vitamin D is manufactured in the skin when it is exposed to the ultraviolet spectrum of the sun's

rays. Sun exposure triggers a chemical reaction with 7-dehydrocholesterol (a form of cholesterol) which is subsequently transferred to the liver or kidneys and converted to calcidiol, a less active form of the vitamin. Calcidiol from the liver is then transported to the kidneys for conversion into calcitriol or D3, the most fully active form of vitamin D.

Experts say vitamin D deficiency is much more common than previously believed — especially in northern climates like ours, where the solar radiation from October to March is not sufficient to maintain healthy levels. While supplements offer a cheap and easy solution, researchers argue the recommended intake is too low to provide many health benefits.

Many doctors once scoffed at the notion of vitamin D deficiency, but blood tests which measure the active form of vitamin D have become more routine and are covered by most insurance. University of Washington heart surgeon Dr. Donald Miller Jr. tested 78 of his patients and found three-quarters had "insufficient" levels of vitamin D. "It was pretty shocking," said Miller.

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Community Dining Program

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Senior Services
Promoting the well-being of older adults

Our Community Dining Sites:

Auburn
(253) 931-3016

North Bellevue
(425) 452-7681

**Lake Heights
YMCA
(in Bellevue's
Factoria)**
(425) 644-8417

Black Diamond
(360) 886-2418

Central Area
(206) 726-4926

Des Moines
(206) 878-1642

Enumclaw
(360) 825-0559

**Federal Way
Community
Center**
(253) 835-6900

Issaquah
(425) 392-2381

**Kawabe
House
(Int'l District)**
(206) 322-4550

**Peter Kirk
(in Kirkland)**
(425) 587-3360

**Mt Si
(in North Bend)**
(425) 888-3434

Recently I introduced myself as the new Community Dining Program Manager and now we are saying good-bye to many of you because our program is changing. After several decades of serving meals at many sites around Seattle and King County, our funding agency is changing the way it is awarding the funds. As a result, Senior Services will be leaving some sites and another agency will provide the dining program after January 1, 2009.

Senior Services is proud of the long years of service we have provided many of you and we will miss you and the wonderfully dedicated volunteers and staff in your centers. We trust that many of those same staff and volunteers will continue serving you through the new program providers and that many of the familiar faces you have come to know will still be behind the serving counter.

We are pleased to continue to serve the Community Dining Program at Ballard Northwest, The Central Area Senior Center, Northshore Senior Center, Shoreline Senior Center, Sno-Valley Community Center, Southeast Senior Center, the Senior Center of West Seattle, Kawabe Memorial House, Kline Galland Nursing Home, Lake Heights YMCA, the Renton Senior Activity Center, and Wallingford Senior Center.

I will also be leaving the Community Dining Program to become the Major Gifts and Planned Giving Manager for Senior Services. I am grateful for the introduction to Senior Services I received through all of you; diners, volunteers, staff, and center directors. In my new position I will work very hard to help raise the dollars to carry on our programs and, thanks to you, I will have real people and real stories to carry with me to that task and remind me why it is so important to ask others to contribute to our programs.

At the sites where we will continue to provide meals, we look forward to a renewed dedication to service and an enhanced partnership with each center. We hope over time to experiment with some new models for Community Dining, offering more choices and different ways of preparing and presenting the food.

Bon appétit.

Bill Dorn
Project Manager
Community Dining

**More
Community
Dining Sites:**

North SeaTac
(206)973-4680

**Northshore
(in Bothell)**
(425) 487-2441

Ballard
(206) 297-0403

Pacific Algonia
(253) 929-1150

Redmond
(425) 556-2314

Renton
(425) 255-7932

**Shoreline-
Lake Forest Park**
(206) 365-1536

Sno-Valley
(425) 333-4152

**Southeast
Seattle**
(206) 722-0317

**Kline-Galland
(in Southeast
Seattle)**
(206) 725-8800

Wallingford
(206) 461-7825

West Seattle
(206) 932-4044

(Vitamin D...continued from page 1)

In a study of 1,739 Boston-area residents reported recently, rates of heart attack, stroke and heart failure were about 50 percent higher in those with low levels of vitamin D.

In addition to strengthening bones, muscles and joints, high levels of vitamin D have been linked with lower rates of colon, prostate, breast, esophageal and pancreatic cancer. Vitamin D also appears to be one of the reasons that multiple sclerosis and other autoimmune diseases are twice as common in northern vs. southern states.

The Institute of Medicine currently recommends an Adequate Intake, or AI, rather than a specific daily amount of vitamin D. The AI for vitamin D is 200 International Units for adults under age 50, 400 IU for those 51 to 70, and 600 IU for those age 71 and above. As new studies continue to showcase vitamin D's potential benefits, more scientists are calling for higher recommendations.

Last year, a group of leading scientists published an editorial in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* calling for an "urgent need" to increase the AI for vitamin D. Among them was Walter Willett, M.D., the widely respected chairperson of the Harvard School of Public Health's department of nutrition. "The range we are talking about –1,000 IU per day—is still a small dose," Willet says.

In response to the debate, the National Institute of Health's Office of Dietary Supplements last year began an intensive effort to learn more about vitamin D, which may result in a new AI when the Dietary Guidelines for Americans are revised in 2010.

Whatever the AI recommendation, you have three options for obtaining vitamin D: food, sunlight, or supplements.

Source One: Food

Foods naturally rich in vitamin D are scarce. Seafood options top the list -- cod liver oil, salmon, mackerel and tuna. After that fortified foods help fill the gap. Milk is fortified with 100 IU per 8-ounce serving. Some yogurts and cheeses also contain vitamin D as do breakfast cereals and juices.

Source Two: Sunlight

Every time sunlight warms your skin, your body produces vitamin D – 15 to 20 minutes of sunlight at full body exposure at midday summer sun produces 10,000 IU. Sunlight can be an unreliable source depending upon the latitude in which you live, your skin pigmentation, age, and use of skin-care products containing sun protection factor (SPF). Also, there's the not-small matter of skin cancer risk, which is heightened by exposure to sunlight.

Source Three: Supplements

Supplements are a reliable – and safe –source of vitamin D. The key is buying the right type. Check the label to make sure the vitamin you choose is made with the D3 form. It may be listed as cholecalciferol, the most readily absorbed form of vitamin D. Most multivitamins are fortified with the current AI for vitamin D: 400 IU. Remember, though, if you are over 70 the current AI is 600 IU. It is possible to go overboard with supplements and trigger dangerous calcium deposits in kidneys and blood vessels, but it takes a lot: more than 10,000 IU a day for a year.

Sources: Cooking Light Magazine 2008; The Seattle Times, February 13, 2008 by Sandi Doughton; Staying Healthy with Nutrition: The Complete Guide to Diet and Nutritional Medicine by Elson M. Haas.

Spiced Banana Orange Smoothie

(makes 2 servings)

Ingredients:

- 1 medium banana, peeled and cut into chunks
- 1 large seedless orange, peeled and sliced
- 2 cups plain or vanilla-flavored soy milk *
- 1 teaspoon powdered ginger
- 3 or 4 ice cubes

- Variation: 2 cups of non-fat or low-fat milk can be substituted for soy milk. For those who want to gain weight, use 2 cups of homogenized milk.

Directions:

1. Place all ingredients except ice cubes in blender. Cover and blend on high speed for 15 seconds or until smooth.

2. Add ice cubes, cover and blend for 15 seconds more or until well blended.

Serve immediately.

Each serving provides 100 IUs of vitamin D.

WORD FIND

A	C	M	F	Q	U	B	T	S	K	I	N	E
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FIND AND CIRCLE THE WORDS LISTED BELOW. THEY MAY APPEAR HORIZONTALLY (BACKWARDS OR FORWARDS), VERTICALLY (UP OR DOWN) OR DIAGONALLY (UP OR DOWN).

BONES
CALCIUM
DEFICIENCY
EAT
FOOD

FORTIFIED
IMMUNE
INTAKE
MACKEREL
MILK

NUTRIENT
SALMON
SKIN
SUN
SUPPLEMENTS

TUNA