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Vitamin D and Your Health -- Please Don't Take My Sunshine Away!

For those living in temperate regions, and that means most of us, every year in the late fall and winter we face the greatest impact on our health - the shorter days cause less access to sunlight, and as a result we lose Vitamin D, the "sunshine vitamin." In the winter we need to get Vitamin D in other ways, as we can no longer rely on skin exposure to the sun to provide this essential and vital ingredient in our health.

In spring, summer and fall, we can make enough Vitamin D from exposure to sunlight - just 15 minutes, 2-3 times a week is all we need. But in winter this is not possible. Below 35° latitude, south of Memphis, Tennessee, for example, Vitamin D can be made year-round as long as we get some time in the sun. But our modern lifestyle keeps us indoors more than used to be the case.

Let's look first at what exactly Vitamin D is and what it does.

Vitamin D is most commonly known for treating and preventing rickets, a condition of severe limiting, softening and weakening of the bones. Vitamin D is critical to bone growth, density and strength. It helps to prevent tooth decay and builds strong teeth. Periodontal "disease," that is inflammation and softening of the gums leading to weaker teeth, is also partly linked to deficiencies of Vitamin D.

But Vitamin D is also a very important part of a healthy immune system, particularly in fighting off viruses, such as the common cold and various flu strains. Researchers now estimate that 60 to 100% of North Americans are Vitamin D-deficient, particularly those living above the 42nd parallel, where winters are long, and our seasonal clothing exposes a scant five per cent of our skin to sunlight much of the year.

Recently, investigators at the Harvard School of Public Health and the University of California, among others, found that people with the highest blood levels of Vitamin D (2,000 units or more) had a 50% reduced risk of developing colorectal cancer. They also found that women with the equivalent of at least 4,000 units of Vitamin D in their blood were 50% less likely to develop breast cancer. Last year's study of seven million U.S. military personnel found that those with the highest blood levels of Vitamin D had a 62% lower risk of developing multiple sclerosis than their colleagues.

There are two main forms of Vitamin D: Vitamin D2, found in plants, and Vitamin D3, found in animals.

In mammals, including man, ultraviolet light converts a special form of cholesterol, 7-dehydrocholesterol, into cholecalciferol, the initial form of Vitamin D3. This form, however, is not active and needs to be converted in the liver and kidneys into calcitriol. Because cholecalciferol does not qualify as the fully active form of Vitamin D3 in humans, it is often referred to as "proVitamin D" (or "proVitamin D3"), meaning "preliminary form."

We could take the natural plant form of Vitamin D, but it is far inferior to animal-derived Vitamin D. Concentrated food sources of Vitamin D include salmon, sardines, shrimp, milk, cod, and eggs.

Sockeye salmon is an exceptionally rich source of Vitamin D: a 4-ounce serving of baked or broiled sockeye salmon provides over 700 IU of Vitamin D. The same 4-ounce serving of chinook salmon, another excellent source of Vitamin D, supplies only about 400 IU.

Many animal-based Vitamin D supplements contain cholecalciferol, derived from 7-dehydrocholesterol that was produced by the sebaceous glands in the skin of an animal (typically sheep) and then removed from the fur of the animal (typically raw sheep's wool), and exposed to ultra-violet B light that converts it into cholecalciferol.

In 1997, the National Academy of Sciences set Tolerable Upper Intake Levels (ULs) for Vitamin D as follows: infants, 0-12 months, 1,000 IU per day; children and adults, 2,000 IU per day; pregnant and lactating women, 2,000 IU per day.

A person sunbathing can get 10-20,000 IU in 15 minutes (or 10% of that if dark-skinned), and at that level, the liver will store it for about 30 days.

Cod liver oil also contains good levels of Vitamin A, which works synergistically with Vitamin D to promote bone growth and immune function.

Natural vs. Synthetic

Natural forms are always superior as they are easily and readily absorbed and utilized, whereas synthetic forms are irritating and at the levels recommended or higher, can actually weaken or harm the system. The best source is cod liver oil, and there are many excellent brands available. The key is freshness; fresh cod liver oil has no fishy smell or taste - if it does, it should not be used as it has excessively oxidized. Most other products, such as D-Drops, will specify if they are from natural source. If not, they are generally synthetic.

Safety Issues

According to Sally Fallon at the Weston A. Price Foundation: "Cod liver oil is probably one of the cleanest foods in the food supply. All cod liver oil goes through a complete filtering process, and repeated testing has shown that the amounts of mercury and PCBs in cod liver oil are undetectable. The articles on cod liver oil by the Weston A. Price Foundation (westonprice.org) are well worth reading.

How Much?

As usual, official levels are set to avoid clinical signs of deficiency, not to promote optimum health. At the same time, natural, whole food sources of vitamins provide a greater impact than the actual measured quantity, because of

the synergistic effect provided by the whole food context.

Cod liver oil is a whole food source of Vitamin D (not to mention Vitamin A, also scarce in winter months as we get it normally from fresh vegetables), as is oily fish such as salmon. One of the best articles regarding dosage is by Sally Fallon, author of the book, *Nourishing Traditions*, at westonaprice.org. This same article also provides dosages and suggests the best brands to buy around the world based on research at the Weston A. Price Foundation.

Grandma's Secret Weapon

For the first half of the 20th century, governments, doctors and health-care workers promoted daily ingestion of cod liver oil by children and adults, but in the modern drug era, this wise tradition fell by the wayside. Instead, synthetic forms of Vitamin D were promoted, but these are rejected by the body and do little good and have the potential for harm.

More recently, cod liver oil has returned and there are very good versions available, with added natural flavors such as lemon or orange. There are also very good versions of natural Vitamin D without the oil, such as D Drops.

We recommend whole foods, either in fresh, local form, or whole food or green food concentrate form, rather than supplements, but Vitamin D supplementation in the winter months is essential, and nature has provided a ready-made source in the form of cod-liver oil. Using this is perhaps the simplest and cheapest way to protect our health during the long winter months, and cod liver oil as well as other natural forms of Vitamin D are *truly* "liquid sunshine" or "liquid gold."

Baked Applesauce

- 2 large navel oranges, zested and juiced
- 1 lemon, zested and juiced
- 3 pounds Granny Smith apples (about 6 to 8 apples)
- 3 pounds sweet red apples, such as Macoun, McIntosh, or Winesap (about 6 to 8 apples)
- 1/2 cup light brown sugar, packed
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon ground allspice

Directions

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. Place the zest and juice of the oranges and lemon in a large bowl. Peel, quarter, and core the apples (reserving the peel of 2 of the red apples) and toss them in the juice. Pour the apples, reserved apple peel (to add a pink colour to the sauce), and juice into a nonreactive Dutch oven or enameled iron pot. Add the brown sugar, butter, cinnamon, and allspice and cover the pot. Bake for 1 hour, or until all the apples are soft. Remove and discard the red apple peel. Mix with a whisk until smooth, and serve warm or at room temperature.

Food Network



Food Facts:

***Will an apple a day really keep the doctor away?
It can't hurt!***

Apples are a source of both soluble and insoluble fiber. Soluble fiber such as pectin actually helps to prevent cholesterol buildup in the lining of blood vessel walls, thus reducing the incident of atherosclerosis and heart disease. The insoluble fiber in apples provides bulk in the intestinal tract, holding water to cleanse and move food quickly through the digestive system.

It is a good idea to eat apples with their skin (thus, organic only). Almost half of the vitamin C content is just underneath the skin. Eating the skin also increases insoluble fiber content. Most of an apple's fragrance cells are also concentrated in the skin and as they ripen, the skin cells develop more aroma and flavor.



*the Dutch Baby -
awaiting your creative touches!*

Dutch Baby

Put 1 stick of unsalted butter into a cast iron pan and put it into an oven that is at 350F. While waiting for the butter to get all hot and bubbly, mix thoroughly in the blender:

4 eggs 1 cup flour of your choice 1 cup milk, and a touch of vanilla

Pull out the pan, and pour the batter into the hot butter, and it starts cooking right away. Put the pan back into oven at 350F until it is puffy and slightly brown on edges.

Sprinkle on powdered sugar, then lemon, and it will sink a bit.

Serve with fruit, or chicken or organic beef sausages if you want protein. It is delicious with maple syrup, or even something savory!

Marla Wilson

NEWS, EVENTS, CONTACT

Hahnemann College's Winter School

In late February many students of the Hahnemann College are gathering in paradise for several days of learning and soaking up the subject of this newsletter - Vitamin D!

We will be in Hope Town, Elbow Cay, in the Abacos, Bahamas. Classes are held at the Hope Town Harbour Lodge: www.hopetownlodge.com/

If you're ever looking for a phenomenal location for a family holiday, we can totally recommend Hope Town. Most people who visit here never find the need to travel anywhere else! Ask us for details if you're interested in a magnificent vacation.



Hahnemann's Brunch

Keep this date open!

On April 5th, the Hahnemann Center Trust is planning to once again host largest fund-raising activity of the year - the birthday brunch in honour of Dr. Samuel Hahnemann, founder of Heilkunst and homeopathy. In 2008 we raised \$860 and in 2007 \$1800,. And we'd love to have you join us in 2009.

The Trust helps patients in need who are not able to pay for their treatment, and provides scholarships to those wishing to study to become a Heilkünstler. When the coffers are low, the assistance to those in need is halted.

For those of you "from away," though you can't enjoy a brunch with us, you still can donate to the Trust in honour of Dr. Hahnemann as you are able, and we appreciate it!

Just write: trust@homeopathy.com. For those in Canada, a tax receipt can be issued on request for donations over \$20.

Thanks for your support!



Hahnemann College's Summer School

On the 10th through the 13th of July the Hahnemann College offers its Summer School, held at St. Paul University in Ottawa, Canada. Students and patients have come from all over the world to learn more about Heilkunst, with topics from the most basic to very specific. If you'd like to consider joining us and you're not a student, write registrar@homeopathy.com.

Mini-courses for Families

The Hahnemann College offers courses both large and small. For parents our six-month *Homeopathy at Home* course is likely just what you need. It covers all of the homeopathic principles, remedy prescribing, and includes lessons on how to care for any family emergency, from first aid to colds, coughs and gastro upsets through the flu.

For the past few months, Patty Smith has hosted teleconference dealing with first aid, and minor acute winter illnesses. If this has whet your appetite - consider learning more! The mini-course is perfect for anyone who wants to help themselves and their families, without becoming a Heilkünstler. And, if you do decide you'd like to study further, the cost of the course is subtracted from the total for the full diploma program. It is a win-win proposition!

For more information contact registrar@homeopathy.com.

The practitioners and staff of the Hahnemann Clinics and College wish you and your loved ones a very healthy and happy holiday season!

We look forward to working with you in the new year.

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