EAT SMART NEWSLETTER

The Essentials about Vitamin D

An Increasingly Important Player in a Healthful Diet

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Why it's so good for you. In addition to vitamin D's well-known function of increasing calcium absorption (fostering healthy bone growth), research is showing that it also has promise in helping to prevent certain cancers, heart disease, diabetes, and osteoarthritis.

- *But many of us do not obtain enough Vitamin D to reap the benefits of this wonder vitamin.*

Why we don't get enough. Without adequate, consistent and direct exposure to the sun, our bodies cannot produce enough vitamin D on its own. Additionally, there are very few food sources of vitamin D, so most of us don't get enough through food intake.

- *Some estimates claim that as much as 60 per cent of northern populations may be vitamin D deficient.*

Most of us do not obtain adequate vitamin D from the foods we eat or sun exposure. Supplementation of around 1000 IU/day is highly recommended to maintain desired vitamin D blood levels.

So *how much* is enough? The current adequate intake [AI] for vitamin D is 400 IU/day for most people (more is recommended for aging populations; less for infants and children).

- However, scientific studies published in prestigious journals such as the *New England Journal of Medicine* and the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* have found that an AI of more like 800 - 1000 IU/day is necessary to maintain desired vitamin D blood levels.

Is there a risk for toxicity? A recent study found that only children given the equivalent of 2000 IU/day of vitamin D increased their blood levels of the vitamin to desired levels.

- *No evidence of vitamin D intoxication was reported, which would indicate that this level would also be safe for adults.*

Where can I read more?

- Vitamin D and breast cancer: http://www.cnn.com/2008/HEALTH/conditions/05/16/vitamind.breast.cancer.ap/index.html
- Vitamin D and kids: http://www.nutraingredients-usa.com/news/printNewsBis.asp?id=85538
- NIH fact sheet: http://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/vitamind.asp
- Vitamin D – it's not just for bones anymore: http://www.meritcare.com/news/speakers/cathy_breedon/pdfs/VitaminD.pdf