



## Nutrition Nibbles

### Spotlight on the Sunshine Vitamin

In November of 2010, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) revealed its long awaited, newly updated Vitamin D recommendations. Many scientists and medical experts argue that the latest suggestions still are not high enough in light of vitamin D's great health benefits and the world's low blood levels of vitamin D. What exactly is vitamin D, you might ask? What role does it play in our health? Where do you find vitamin D? Let me illuminate the subject for you...

Vitamin D, also known as the **Sunshine Vitamin**, is actually a hormone produced in the body using ultraviolet B rays of the sun. Being outdoors and letting our skin absorb some sunny rays is our largest source of vitamin D. All it takes is 10-15 minutes of sun exposure, without sunscreen, 2-3 times each week (not enough to cause skin cancer but sufficient to produce adequate amounts of vitamin D).

☀ Vitamin D has been implicated in bone health and strength, along with calcium, for years and years. But did you know that vitamin D is being linked to immunity, cancer prevention, and longevity?

☀ Vitamin D prompts the body to make antimicrobial substances

that act like natural antibiotics and antiviral agents. (Think of these agents as your own body's form of Purell or Lysol sanitizer). Vitamin D, via this mechanism, strengthens our immune system and keeps us healthy.

☀ Vitamin D has been linked to 17 different types of cancer, including breast, colon, prostate, and lung cancers. It appears that adequate intake of vitamin D provides a good dose of cancer prevention.

☀ Most recently, vitamin D has been associated with living a longer life. Studies show those people with the highest vitamin D intake had a 7% decrease in all-cause mortality. Is vitamin D the newest fountain of youth?

☀ Scientists are currently conducting research on vitamin D's connection with autoimmune diseases like type 1 diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, and multiple sclerosis, as well as seeking out the relationship between vitamin D and conditions such as cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, kidney disease, and psoriasis. Speculation exists as to whether or not vitamin D is linked to autism and even weight gain during menopause.

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### College Corner: Food Secret Swap

Students are always looking for easy ways to inject flavor and nutrition into their fast-paced lives and on-the-go diets. Here are a few of my food staple secrets.

→ **In A Whole Grain Minute:** I always like to keep a variety of quick-cooking whole grains on hand. My favorites include old-fashioned oats, corn tortillas, quinoa, minute brown rice, and whole wheat pasta noodles. It is easy to build a meal around these tasty, fiber-rich, and nutrient-packed foods.

→ **Mrs. Dash In My Stash:** Certain foods just taste better with a little enhancement. *Mrs. Dash* seasoning mix is salt-free but chock full of flavorful herbs and spices. Shake it on your salads, vegetables, grains, and lean protein for a dash of pizzazz.

→ **A Can and a Plan:** I have at least one can of low sodium black beans in my pantry at all times. They provide a quick, no-hassle protein source that can be added to quesadillas, salads, and rice, enjoyed as a side dish, or blended into an appetizing dip. Rinse, heat, eat, and repeat!

→ **Shelve the Snacks:** My motto is to always be prepared in case hunger strikes. When I'm in a hurry, I can't stand hunting

**Questions or Comments? Email me at [marymahoneyrd@comcast.net](mailto:marymahoneyrd@comcast.net)**

## Spotlight on the Sunshine Vitamin cont...

☀ Interestingly, as we age our ability to synthesize vitamin D decreases. Unfortunately, few foods contain vitamin D naturally in significant amounts. Fatty fish and egg yolks contain some vitamin D. Milk, orange juice, and breakfast cereals are commonly fortified with vitamin D. (Note: All milk is fortified with vitamin D—not just “whole vitamin D milk.” Choose 1% or fat-free dairy for a healthy heart and a smaller waistline).

How much vitamin D do we need on a daily basis? According to the latest IOM report, if you're under the age of 70, live in California, and spend some time out in the sunshine, you probably are making enough vitamin D. If you spend much of your time indoors, are a sunscreen fanatic, or are older than 70, the current IOM report recommends 800 International Units of vitamin D daily between food and supplements.

If you are worried that you may be D-ficient, ask your doctor to check your blood levels of 25(OH)D. Your vitamin D level should be at least 30 nanograms per millileter (ng/mL).

☀ Check out the latest IOM vitamin D recommendations for yourself:

<http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2010/Dietary-Reference-Intakes-for-Calcium-and-Vitamin-D.aspx>

☀ For more information on vitamin D, check out: <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/what-should-you-eat/vitamin-d/index.html>

In Next Month's Issue of Nutrition Nibbles:

### ☀ Eat Your Sunscreen!

Tips for protecting your skin from the inside out...



## College Corner continued...

around the kitchen looking for that grab-and-go snack to take with me. My solution is to keep a few tried-and-true tasty noshes together on a shelf in my pantry. I know exactly where those granola bars and trail mix are when I need them!

### → Stock-Up and Prep

**Ahead:** It is hard to eat plenty of produce if there isn't any in your kitchen! I make sure to stock-up each week on fresh fruits and vegetables. I'm just as busy as the next gal and I hate to stop what I'm doing to make a salad, wash an apple, or chop some broccoli. I try to do most of fruit and vegetable prep at the beginning of the week so I can avoid it the rest of the week! This ensures that I enjoy ample nutrient-rich and fluid-filled produce all week long.

→ **Sip That Soda?!** You read that right...sometimes I like to drink something fizzy but without all the calories and sweetness of regular (or even diet) soda. My go-to fun drink is plain club soda over ice with a twist of lime. It's quite refreshing!

**Let's swap!** I've shared some of my favorite food secrets with you, it's your turn now! What are yours?

## Favorite Food

Lots of people are curious about what dietitians eat when they are “off-duty.” I have been cooking up a storm with mushrooms lately and they are rich in vitamin D, I might add. The particular brand of mushrooms I've been purchasing has been

exposed to light while growing so they have a chance to synthesize their own vitamin D. Mushrooms make a tasty addition to my pasta sauces, vegetable sautés, soups, and eggplant parmesan. To enjoy some of your own vitamin D mushrooms, look for Monterey Mushrooms.

Mary's Motto #11:  
**Always be prepared in case  
hunger strikes!**