

The Sunshine Vitamin – Sunny D

Vitamin D is best known for building strong bones, but it may have another benefit: longevity.

A recent study analysis (18 studies involving nearly 60,000 people) indicated that those who took vitamin D supplements had a 7 percent reduction in mortality from all causes compared with those who didn't take the vitamin.

These new findings add to the growing interest in vitamin D -- often dubbed the "sunshine vitamin" because in its natural form, the vitamin is produced by the skin under the sun's ultraviolet rays.

Beyond its proven bone benefits, vitamin D is critical for immunity, prompting production of antimicrobial substances that seem to act like natural antibiotics and antiviral agents.

Some experts think that the reduced sun exposure during winter could help account for the seasonal ebb and flow of colds and influenza.

Emerging research also points to a role for vitamin D in cancer prevention, particularly against breast, colon, prostate and lung tumors. Vitamin D could help with cancer treatment. One recent study found that lung cancer patients who either got a lot of sun or had a high intake of vitamin D had three times the survival rate of their counterparts with lower vitamin D levels.

Another possible benefit of vitamin D is prevention of Type 2 diabetes, which affects an estimated 17 million Americans. It has also been found that vitamin D deficiency during pregnancy may play a role in the worldwide increase of childhood autism.

So how could one vitamin have so many potentially wide-ranging effects? Unlike other vitamins, D acts both as a vitamin and as a hormone that can be activated as needed by the body.

Vitamin D supplementation? Getting sun exposure is one way to produce Vitamin D, but with age, the skin's ability to produce vitamin D drops significantly. Adults 65 or older make only 25 percent of the vitamin D produced by those ages 20 to 30.



(OVER)

Here's how you can make sure you get enough vitamin D:

Eat salmon or mackerel. Just 3.5 ounces of either provides 90 percent of the daily value for vitamin D. Other foods naturally rich in vitamin D include sardines, tuna, eggs and liver. Foods fortified with vitamin D include milk, margarine and some breakfast cereals.

Grab a few rays. Emphasis here is on "few," since prolonged sun exposure increases risk of skin cancer significantly. Just 20 minutes of sun exposure without sunscreen enables the skin to produce about 20,000 IU of vitamin D. You'd have to drink about 400 glasses of milk to get that same amount. And contrary to taking mega doses of dietary supplements, it appears that sun exposure does not cause toxic levels of vitamin D.

Take a vitamin D supplement. The National Academy of Sciences sets 200 IU per day as the adequate intake for those 19 to 50 years old; 400 IU for adults 51 to 70; and 600 IU for those 71 or older. In the latest study that showed the 7 percent reduction in mortality, the average intake was about 500 IU per day.

Too much vitamin D can be toxic -- the reason the National Academy of Sciences sets 2,000 IU per day as the tolerable upper limit for adults.

Multivitamins provide vitamin D, but the amount varies widely, so read the labels: Men's One-A-Day contains 400 IU; Centrum Silver has 500 IU; Women's One-A-Day contains 800 IU; and Nature Made Multivitamins provides 1,000 IU.

Many calcium supplements also contain vitamin D, providing between 200 and 400 IU. And single vitamin D supplements are another option. Just make sure that the combination of dietary supplements and food sources of vitamin D don't exceed the upper limit. Signs of toxicity, which include bone loss and kidney problems, begin at about 10,000 IU daily.

Banana Berry Smoothie – Try this smoothie for a quick breakfast, a snack, one to two hours pre-game or as a great recovery beverage. It is a great source of calcium, Vitamin D, protein, potassium and fiber.

1 cup vanilla yogurt	¼ fruit juice	1 ½ cup frozen berries
1 ripe banana (try frozen)	½ cup milk powder	1 Tbs. sugar

Combine all ingredients in a blender. Blend until smooth and creamy.

Makes 2 – 16oz servings.	Calories: 270	Fiber: 2 grams	Protein: 10 grams
Vitamin D: 50 IU	Potassium: 500 mg	Calcium: 350 mg	



Don Mankie, RD
dmankie@LifeWiseFitness.com
540-400-7733
LifeWiseFitness.com