

[IMAGE]

The Many Benefits of Vitamin D

By Editorial Staff

Remember when, as a child, your mother always urged you to play outdoors when the sun was out? She may have been doing more than just getting you out of the house so she could enjoy a little quiet time. She also may have been helping you maintain healthier bones by increasing your ability to make vitamin D, which helps the body absorb calcium, the building material for bones and teeth. The most readily available source of vitamin D is indeed that giant yellow ball in the sky. According to the National Library of Health, as little as 10 to 15 minutes of sun exposure three times a week is enough to fulfill your body's requirements for vitamin D.

Unfortunately, in our current busy world, it can be difficult to spend that much time outdoors, not to mention the potential danger of overexposure - skin cancer. The good news is you can get your daily vitamin D dose from foods and supplements. The current recommended daily dose of vitamin D is 200 IU for younger adults, 400 IU for those between the ages of 51 and 70, and 600 IU for those older than age 70. However, according to a July 2006 study from the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, these recommended amounts may be too low. Study findings indicated that for 50 percent of adults to maintain optimal vitamin D levels, their intake would have to be upped to 700-800 IU per day, and these requirements may be even higher.

An illustration of the sun with vitamin d tablets and healthy foods. - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark So, what happens if you don't get enough vitamin D? Aside from an increased risk for osteoporosis as you age, you also might have a higher chance of developing cardiovascular disease. A study published in the Jan. 7, 2008 issue of *Circulation* found that people with vitamin D deficiencies had a significantly increased risk of developing cardiovascular disease.

There are also protective effects from increasing your vitamin D intake. A recent study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found that young adults with the highest vitamin D intake reduced their risk for multiple sclerosis (MS) by an astonishing 62 percent. Those with vitamin D levels of 100 nmol/L or higher reduced their MS risk by 51 percent, compared to those with a lower vitamin D level.

Vitamin D also can protect you against certain cancers, according to an article in the Jan. 30 2008 issue of the *Journal of Steroid Biochemistry and Molecular Biology*. People who took the maximum recommended vitamin D dosage defined in the study (2,000 IU) and received a moderate amount of sun exposure had a dramatically reduced risk for both breast cancer (in women) and colorectal cancer.

The lesson to be learned is simple: Vitamin D plays an important role in preventing disease, particularly as we age. Good sources include fortified cereal, dairy products, fish and of course, vitamin D or multivitamin supplements. Ask your doctor for more information.

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