



Osteoporosis Canada

Ostéoporose Canada

COPING

July 6, 2012

Remember: You can live well with osteoporosis!

Vitamin D: The Sunshine Vitamin?

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These are the “lazy, hazy days of summer,” and no doubt we are all basking in the sunshine, thinking that we are getting our recommended daily intake of vitamin D from the sun. Unfortunately, in Canada and in many tropical climates, this is not generally the case. In fact, research shows that even individuals who live in tropical areas are often low in vitamin D. To set you straight on the facts about vitamin D, we are reprinting and updating the vitamin D section of the Osteoporosis Canada Nutrition fact sheet.

VITAMIN D: AN IMPORTANT NUTRIENT THAT PROTECTS YOU AGAINST FALLS AND FRACTURES

Vitamin D is very important for bone health. It helps build stronger bones, partly by increasing the absorption of calcium. Vitamin D also improves the function of muscles, which in turn improves your balance and decreases the likelihood of falling. Vitamin D is therefore doubly essential in helping protect you against fractures.

Vitamin D comes from the sun. The sun's rays interact with our skin to produce vitamin D that can be used for bone and muscle health. In Canada, because we live in a



northern climate, we don't get as much sun as we need; and when we apply sunscreen in the summer, the sunscreen disables the skin's ability to produce vitamin D from sun exposure, even in tropical vacation spots. Additionally, as we age, the skin's ability to make vitamin D decreases and for all of these reasons, many Canadians are low on vitamin D.

There are very few food sources of vitamin D. In fact, it is impossible for adults to get sufficient vitamin D from diet alone, no matter how good their nutrition. Therefore, **Osteoporosis Canada recommends routine vitamin D supplementation for all Canadian adults year round.** Healthy adults between 19-50 years of age, including pregnant or breast feeding women, require 400 – 1,000 IU daily. Those over 50 or those younger adults at high risk (with osteoporosis, multiple fractures, or conditions affecting vitamin D absorption) should receive 800 – 2,000 IU daily. These amounts are safe. Taking more than 2,000 IU of vitamin D daily should be done only under medical supervision.

CATEGORY	AGE	RECOMMENDED TOTAL DAILY VITAMIN D INTAKE
Men and Women	19 to 50	400 – 1,000 IU
Men and Women	> 50	800 – 2,000 IU
Pregnant & Lactating Women	> 18	400 – 1,000 IU

The best way to ensure that you are getting sufficient vitamin D is by taking a supplement. The type of vitamin D you should purchase is vitamin D₃ (also called cholecalciferol). This is the most common type of vitamin D found in supplements in Canada.

Cod liver oil and halibut liver oil supplements also contain vitamin D but these sources are not recommended because they also contain a form of vitamin A called “retinol” or “retinyl palmitate” that, if taken in excess, can cause bone loss.

Vitamin D by itself comes in 400 and 1000 IU tablets. Most multivitamins contain some vitamin D but the amounts vary quite a bit, so be sure to read the small print on the label carefully. Some calcium supplements also contain vitamin D₃ and again the amounts vary. If you are unclear how much vitamin D your supplements contain, please check with your pharmacist.

There is something special about vitamin D that does not apply to most other vitamins or supplements. Vitamin D is fat soluble. This means vitamin D can be “made up.” If you miss your vitamin D today, for example, you can take double the amount tomorrow. If you miss your vitamin D for a whole week, you can take all the vitamin D that you missed altogether at the end of the week. However, you shouldn’t do this on a regular basis without consulting with your physician and this can only be done with vitamin D. **It cannot be done with other medications or supplements.**

And there you have it. Supplementation is the way to go to get your vitamin D. But don’t forget that calcium, ideally from food sources, and a balanced diet with adequate protein and lots of fruits and vegetables are also essential for bone health. And there is another reason to be out there enjoying the sun – exercise. Walking, jogging, playing tennis, throwing a Frisbee – all those weight-bearing activities that can be enjoyed outdoors help to build and maintain strong bones. Have a great summer!

FRACTURE FACT: Osteoporosis is often called the ‘silent thief’ because bone loss occurs with no symptoms.

FUNNY BONE:

Here’s a tongue twister for you: “A thin little boy picked six thick thistle sticks.”

A Recipe from Our Sponsor

Chicken Fajitas with Fresh Salsa

Fresh salsa is all the rage and when combined with the smoky flavour of chipotle peppers. This twist on Chicken Fajitas Wraps (complete with all four food groups) makes fajita night even better.

Course: *Main Dishes* **Prep. Time:** 20 mins
Cooking Time: 12 mins **Yields:** 4 to 6 servings

Ingredients:

2 plum (Roma) tomatoes, diced
1/2 sweet red pepper, diced
1/2 avocado, diced (optional)
1/2 jalapeño pepper, minced
1/2 cup (125 ml) shredded Canadian Monterey Jack or Cheddar Cheese
2 tbsp (30 ml) freshly squeezed lime juice
Salt
1 tbsp (15 ml) butter
1 medium onion, sliced
1 lb (500 g) boneless skinless chicken, cut in thin strips
2 tbsp (15 ml) chili powder
1 tbsp (15 ml) minced canned chipotle peppers in adobo sauce (optional)
1 1/2 tsp (7 ml) dried oregano
3 tbsp (45 ml) all-purpose flour
1 cup (250 ml) milk
4 to 6 large whole wheat flour tortillas, warmed
Torn lettuce leaves

For more information about this recipe:

<http://www.dairygoodness.ca/getenough/recipes/chicken-fajitas-with-fresh-salsa>



Directions

1. In a bowl, combine tomato, red pepper, avocado, jalapeño, cheese, lime juice and a 1/8 tsp (0.5 mL) salt; set aside.
2. In large nonstick skillet, melt butter over medium-high heat; sauté onion for 3 min or until softened and starting to brown. Add chicken, chili powder, chipotle, oregano and 1/4 tsp (1 mL) salt; sauté for 5 min until chicken is no longer pink inside.
3. Whisk flour into milk until smooth; gradually stir into skillet. Simmer, stirring, for 3 min or until bubbling and thickened. Line tortillas with lettuce and spoon filling on top along centre; top with fresh salsa. Fold up bottom of tortilla then fold sides to enclose filling.
4. Look for chipotle peppers in cans in the Mexican or Latin sections of grocery stores. If you don't have canned chipotles, you can use 1/4 to 1/2 tsp (1 to 2 mL) chipotle powder, available in the spice section or at bulk stores.

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