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Remember: You can live well with osteoporosis!

Vitamin D: The Sunshine Vitamin?

This article first appeared in our July 6, 2012 COPING Newsletter



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 updating and reprinting our COPING newsletter on vitamin D.

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.

Fracture Fact:

Osteoporosis is often called the ‘silent thief’ because bone loss occurs without symptoms until a fracture (broken bone) occurs.

| 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 sources of vitamin D that are found in the oil of fish liver, are not recommended because the fish liver oils 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. However, it is important to be aware that sun exposure has both positive and negative effects. Positive effects of the sun include warmth and light. Sunlight also lifts people's moods and kills germs. Despite these advantages, overexposure to UV radiation can also have adverse health effects, including sunburn, premature ageing, skin cancers and diseases of the eye. Before going out to enjoy the good weather, make sure you are aware of the risks associated with prolonged exposure to the sun and the measures you can take to protect yourself and your family, such as wearing sun screen, sun glasses and a sun hat.

Have a great summer!

FUNNY BONE:

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

Manitoba Announcement re Aclasta

Osteoporosis Canada congratulates the Manitoba government for providing access to a new osteoporosis medication. Effective July 17, 2013, the Manitoba Drug Benefits Formulary will include Aclasta® (zoledronic acid) for Pharmacare reimbursement upon an individual prescriber/patient request basis. Those eligible for reimbursement for this treatment are female patients with post-menopausal osteoporosis (PMO) at high risk for fracture and who satisfy at least two of the following three criteria:

- (i) Age > 75 years;
- (ii) A prior fragility fracture;
- (iii) A bone mineral density (BMD) T-score \leq -2.5;

OR

Female patients with PMO with a serious intolerance to oral bisphosphonates or for whom oral bisphosphonates are contraindicated.

For specific coverage details in The Manitoba Bulletin, click here

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/mdbif/docs/bulletins/bulletin73.pdf>

Aclasta® is now available on public and private drug plans in Ontario, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, Alberta and Manitoba (as of July 17), meaning many Canadians at high risk for fractures have access to a greater number of treatment options. Please check with your drug benefits provider for the specific coverage details in your province.

ARCHIVED VIRTUAL EDUCATION FORUM:

**Presenter: Dr. Norma MacIntyre, BSc (Physical Therapy), MSc, PhD,
McMaster University**

Tips for Avoiding Osteoporotic Fracture while Living Your Everyday Life

Objectives: By the end of this presentation, participants will be able to:

- Describe how daily activities may increase their functional risk for osteoporotic fracture
- Identify strategies to modify typical movement patterns or daily tasks so these are done safely

For more information, visit our website at <http://www.osteoporosis.ca/osteoporosis-and-you/copn/virtual-forum/>

A Recipe from our Sponsor

Crunchy Cauliflower Salad with Cheddar



Serve this bright and refreshing salad with fresh bread or grilled pita.

Course: *Main Dishes*

Preparation Time: *15 mins* Yields : *4 servings*
1/2 milk product serving(s) per person

Try this salad with any of your favourite **Canadian cheeses**: Try **Provolone**, **Swiss** or **Gouda**.

For more information about this recipe:

<http://www.dairygoodness.ca/getenough/recipes/crunchy-cauliflower-salad-with-cheddar>

Preparation

1/3 cup (80 ml) plain **yogurt**
1/3 cup (80 ml) mayonnaise
2 tbsp (30 ml) freshly squeezed lemon juice
1/2 tsp (2 ml) paprika
Salt
Pepper, to taste
2 cups (500 ml) small cauliflower florets
1 cup (250 ml) small broccoli florets
1 1/2 cups (375 ml) strips grilled or cooked chicken breast
1 1/2 cups (375 ml) cherry tomatoes, cut in half
1 cup (250 ml) shredded old **Canadian Cheddar cheese**
1/3 cup (80 ml) thinly sliced red onion

Instructions

In a large bowl, combine the **yogurt**, mayonnaise, lemon juice, paprika and salt and pepper to taste. Add cauliflower, broccoli, chicken, tomatoes, **cheese** and red onion. Toss gently to coat. Let stand a few minutes before serving.

Tips

If you prefer gently cooked vegetables instead of raw, blanch the cauliflower and broccoli in a large pot of boiling, salted water for about 2 minutes. Drain well and let cool before adding to salad. Or, use frozen vegetables. Just thaw, drain well and pat dry.

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These newsletters are not intended to replace individualized medical advice. Readers are advised to discuss their specific circumstances with their healthcare provider.

This issue of COPING is sponsored by Dairy Farmers of Canada



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