

Real Foods That Heal



Weekly bulletin, volume 2, #6
May 20, 2008

Vitamin D, much more than bone health

In April I attended the Nutrition and Health conference in Phoenix, and have been thinking a lot about Vitamin D since then. Its huge importance as a dietary supplement is just beginning to be appreciated, and its deficiency is both more widespread and more disastrous than we knew. So because I believe this is such an important message for the public, I am departing from previous bulletins and writing this week about a nutrient rather than a whole food.

Recent scientific publications have connected vitamin D deficiency with a very broad list of serious health conditions: cancers of the colon, breast and prostate; osteoporosis (silent risk of hip and vertebral fractures), and osteomalacia (painful bones and muscles); types 1 and 2 diabetes risk; an increased risk of developing rheumatoid arthritis; increased risk of multiple sclerosis; and decreased immunity to infectious diseases such as influenza. Almost every cell in the body has a receptor site for vitamin D activity; that's why its regulatory function is so critical in preventing serious disease.

But could you be deficient? How is a basic vitamin deficiency possible in people who eat a healthy diet daily? The answers are: yes, deficiency is very common in the US and around the world; and it is possible because vitamin D is actually fairly rare in foods. One study estimated that at least 30% of US adults over 50 years have vitamin D deficiency at the end of August, and the numbers are higher in winter and for people with darker skin. This is really a problem of inadequate sun exposure. Humans are designed to make vitamin D in the skin in response to sun exposure. Being outdoors in sunlight in a swimsuit at noon, for 15-20 minutes, WITHOUT sunscreen, will give you the equivalent of 20,000 IU of an oral vitamin D dose, without any risk of toxicity or sunburn, and it's free! This is harder to do the closer you live to the poles, or in the winter. But because most of us will not do this on a daily or even weekly basis, a daily supplement of 1000 IU (international units) of vitamin D3 is recommended to maintain healthy blood levels, or 400 IU per day in infants and children. Recommended doses are higher for people who are already deficient, so I recommend you ask your doctor for a blood test to find out your level.

But since this bulletin is Real FOODS that Heal (and not real vitamins that heal...), I'll end with a food recommendation. We're back to our good friend salmon. A 3.5 ounce serving of wild caught salmon has between 500 and 1000 IU of vitamin D, in addition to all its other health benefits (bulletin 7: Feb 18, 2008). Caution: farm raised (virtually all Atlantic salmon sold is farm raised) has

only 10-25% of the vitamin D level of wild caught. That's another great reason to enjoy wild Alaskan salmon on a regular basis. AND take your vitamin D3 1000 IU daily.

Salmon fillet over red cabbage and onions

First, marinade your wild Alaskan salmon fillet in soy sauce, crushed garlic and ginger slices in olive oil. While that is preparing, sauté in a stainless steel pan a sufficient quantity of sliced red cabbage and white onion. Once softened, set the vegetables aside and sauté the salmon in olive oil on moderately high heat (not smoking) for 3 minutes on each side. Serve the salmon over the mixed onions and cabbage. Delicious!

Finally, even if you have sent it before, please send this bulletin on to 5 friends and encourage them to subscribe so as not to miss one; everyone deserves to know how to reduce their cancer risk by food choices. The link below is quick!

To your health,

Robert Pendergrast, M.D.

www.realfoodsthatheal.com

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