

Vitamin D

Vitamin D plays a key role in bone health. Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium and phosphorus into bones and teeth, regulates how much calcium remains in blood, supports the strength of the immune system and helps regulate cell growth. Milk, some cheese and some yogurts are fortified with Vitamin D and are nutrient-rich food sources of Vitamin D.



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Fast Facts

Vitamin D is important for good health. Current recommendations confirm that adults and children require adequate amounts of this nutrient every day. Americans typically consume just two servings of dairy foods each day and are not consuming adequate amounts of Vitamin D. Adding just one serving of milk, cheese or yogurt helps address important nutrient gaps in the typical diet. A single glass of milk delivers a package of nine essential nutrients that are important for good health, including calcium, Vitamin D, potassium, phosphorus, protein, Vitamins A and B12, riboflavin and niacin. And, nutrient-rich dairy foods provide only 10 percent of the calories in the American diet while providing almost 70 percent of the recommended amount of Vitamin D.

Vitamin D helps build strong bones. Calcium and Vitamin D work together to build strong bones. The effect of Vitamin D on calcium absorption is similar to a liquid and sponge. Vitamin D works as the liquid and aids in the absorption of calcium into the sponge-like bone tissue. The American Academy of Pediatrics 2006 report on optimizing bone health recommends consuming three servings of low-fat or fat-free milk to meet calcium and Vitamin D intakes each day.

Sunshine and healthy food choices. Vitamin D is unique. The body can synthesize all the Vitamin D it needs when given adequate exposure to sunshine. Because of cold winter weather, sedentary indoor lifestyles and increased use of sunscreen, many children and adults are not exposed to sufficient sunlight and need increased food sources of Vitamin D. Milk is the #1 food source of calcium and Vitamin D in US diets. Because few foods are naturally occurring sources of Vitamin D, fluid milk has been fortified since the 1930s. The dietary recommendation for Vitamin D increased for many Americans from 200 to 400 IU/day for those 1-50 years old, and from 400 to 600 IU/day for those ages 51-70. (*Dietary Reference Intakes for Calcium and Vitamin D, Institute of Medicine Report, November 2010*)

Review the Research

Scientific research supports the evidence that calcium and Vitamin D play key roles in bone health. The Institute of Medicine (IOM) released new dietary recommendations for calcium and Vitamin D in 2010. These recommendations confirm that adults and children require adequate amounts of these nutrients every day to support and maintain good bone health for life (*Dietary Reference Intakes for Calcium and Vitamin D, Institute of Medicine Report, November 2010.*) Including dairy foods in the daily eating plan helps meet the daily nutrient recommendations. *The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommend three servings of low-fat or fat-free dairy products every day.



Check it! Read the nutrition facts panel on milk, yogurt and cheese labels and choose dairy products that are Vitamin D fortified. Track your choices and try to eat 100% of the recommended amount of Vitamin D on most days. Along with Vitamin D, dairy products provide calcium for strong bones, carbohydrate for energy, water for hydration and other essential nutrients for good health. For an added dose of Vitamin D, try to be out in the sunshine without sunscreen for 15-20 minutes daily.

Choosing Three Servings Every Day

Nutrient-rich milk, cheese and yogurt are easy to include in your every day diet. Choose reduced-fat, low-fat or fat-free options to fit nutrition needs.

Milk-- 8 ounces (1 cup)

Natural Cheese-- 1 1/2 ounces

Yogurt-- 8 ounces (1 cup)

Check the nutrition facts label to be sure the product is fortified with Vitamin D. Serve milk with meals, offer fruit and yogurt for breakfast and snack time, choose chocolate milk for a mid-afternoon break. For suggestions and recipes featuring Wisconsin cheese, milk and yogurt, visit www.EatWisconsinCheese.com and www.NationalDairyCouncil.org/recipes.