

Vitamin D plays important role in building and maintaining bones

Some people may not be getting an appropriate amount of vitamin D. From infancy to older age, vitamin D plays an important role in building and maintaining bone by helping with calcium absorption.

When older adults have too little vitamin D, their bones must loan some calcium to their blood to help the heart and nerves. That leads to decreased bone density and an increased risk of hip fractures. In children, a vitamin D deficiency can lead to stunted growth and bowed legs. This condition, called rickets, afflicts many children worldwide. It was a problem in the U.S. until milk was fortified with vitamin D, beginning in the 1930s. Rickets may be making a comeback among infants as women breast feed without taking vitamin D supplements.

Vitamin D is a unique nutrient because it can be made

with a little help from sunshine. It is formed when ultraviolet (UV) B rays from the sun change a type of cholesterol just under the skin. The liver and kidneys then convert this into a usable form of vitamin D.

Most people get the amount of vitamin D they need from sun exposure. You can't always rely on this, however. The amount that forms depends on the time of year, the length of exposure, the pigmentation of your skin, whether you use sunscreen, and your age.

In general, more UV-B rays are available closer to noontime, in summer, at latitudes closer to the equator, and at higher altitudes. Cloudy and smoggy skies can block UV rays. Sunscreens with sun protection factors (SPF) greater than 8 can also interfere with making vitamin D.

It may take 5 to 6 times longer to make vitamin D when

skin is darker in color. Also, older adults may make half as much vitamin D as younger adults as their older bodies are less efficient at making and activating the vitamin.

It's hard to say exactly how much sun exposure is needed. Baring the hands, arms, and face to June noontime sunshine for 10 to 15 minutes two to three times per week may provide enough vitamin D. Sunscreen should be applied after the short exposure to avoid skin cancer risks.

When sun exposure isn't possible dietary sources of vitamin D become important. Vitamin D is only found naturally in a few foods, including salmon, sardines, herring, and eggs. Fortified milk is an excellent source with 100 International Units (IU) per cup. Infant formulas are fortified with the same

amount as milk. Some fortified breakfast cereals and margarine are also sources of vitamin D.

The amount of vitamin D that people need isn't exactly known because the contribution of sun exposure can vary. An adequate intake is estimated to be about 5 micrograms of cholecalciferol (the pre-vitamin D form) per day for ages 9 to 50 years. This increases to 10 micrograms for ages 51 to 70 and increases to 15 micrograms for adults over age 70. One microgram is equal to 40 IU, the way that vitamin D quantities are still expressed on most pill bottles.

It is also possible to get too much vitamin D. Sun exposure and most food won't lead to excess, but supplements and some fortified foods could provide too much in some cases.

Just five times what you need could lead to heart and kidney damage. Read food and supplement labels to see how much vitamin D you're getting. Be aware that liquid supplements, multivitamins, and calcium supplements can all be sources.

Older adults are vulnerable to vitamin D deficiency and should ask their physicians whether they might need a vitamin D supplement. This could especially be a concern if they aren't getting enough vitamin D or are taking laxatives that prevent vitamin D absorption.

Breast-fed infants that don't receive a vitamin D supplement and aren't exposed to the sun are also at risk. Nursing mothers should ask about vitamin D supplementation.

(Source: Carolyn Raab, OSU Extension Food & Nutrition Specialist)

Jazzercise offers new classes & times

Two new Jazzercise dance-fitness classes started the first week of December. Jazzercise instructor Penny Costley added the classes to accommodate new participants and to provide current participants with a greater choice of convenient class times.

The new classes will take place at 4:00 p.m. on Mondays and Wednesdays at the First Baptist Church located on the corner of Washington and A Street.

"I'm excited about the growth of Jazzercise locally,"

said Costley. "Jazzercise offers a unique blend of fitness and jazz dance that Vernonia residents have discovered is a lot of fun. The new classes will just make it easier for participants to enjoy a workout where and when it's convenient for them."

The 60-minute Jazzercise class includes a warm-up, high-energy aerobic routines, muscle-toning and cool-down stretch segment. Jazzercise combines elements of dance, resistance training, Pilates, yoga, kick-boxing and more to create programs for people of

every age and fitness level.

Now celebrating its 35th year, Jazzercise, created by Judi Sheppard Missett, is the world's leading dance-fitness program. With more than 5,800 instructors teaching 20,000 classes weekly worldwide, the comprehensive program, designed to enhance cardiovascular endurance, strength, and flexibility has helped millions of people of all ages and fitness levels reap the benefits of exercise and improve well-being. Costley has been an instructor in the Vernonia area for six months and a student for five years.

Current classes are held at 9:30 a.m. Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays and also at 7:15 p.m. Monday through Thursdays. For more information on Jazzercise contact Penny Costley at 503-429-0196. For worldwide class information, go to <www.jazzercise.com> or call 1-800-FIT-IS-IT (1-800-348-4748).

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Penny Costley 503-429-0196
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