

To Your Health!

By Judy Hargis, P.A., and Audeen Wagner



VITAMIN D The Rest of the Story

Lately, we have been hearing a lot about vitamin D and many of us are not aware of the significant impact vitamin D has on our health. Believe it or not, low levels of vitamin D are highly prevalent in the United States. This is especially true in areas without much sunshine. Vitamin D is a fat soluble vitamin that is naturally present in very few foods, is added to others and is available as a dietary supplement. Our major source of vitamin D comes from the sun when ultraviolet light strikes the skin and triggers vitamin D synthesis. That is how vitamin D is made. Without adequate sun

exposure we develop vitamin D insufficiency or deficiency, which can lead to serious health problems. We have been aware for some time that vitamin D is essential for calcium absorption in the gut and that insufficient calcium leads to thinning bones and osteoporosis. Now there is mounting evidence that vitamin D may play a role in the prevention of other diseases.

There is evidence that Vitamin D supplementation may protect against several types of cancer, including breast and colorectal cancer, and that evidence continues to mount. Vitamin D deficiency has also been associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular disease. The studies are ongoing and have shown that a high percentage of the people involved in the studies, who had cardiovascular disease and several types of cancers studied, had vitamin D deficiency when serum levels were tested.

Risk factors for vitamin D insufficiency and deficiency include season, geographic latitude, cloud cover, smog, skin melanin content and sunscreen/sun block use as they can interfere with the ability of the skin to make vitamin D. Groups at risk of developing vitamin D deficiency include breast-fed infants because vitamin D requirements cannot be met by human milk alone. Another risk group is older adults because, after 50 years, the skin is not able to synthesize vitamin D efficiently and the kidneys are less able to convert vitamin D to its active hormone form. People who have limited sun exposure, have dark skin, have a fat malabsorption disorder, are obese or have undergone gastric bypass surgery are also at risk.

In our culture, there are many challenges to getting adequate amounts of vitamin D. We tend to be more sedentary and spend more time indoors when at home and at work. When we are outdoors, it is recommended that we protect ourselves from the risks of sun damage and skin cancer by using hats, cover ups and sunscreen/sunblock. We live fast paced lives with less than optimal diets.

There are new guidelines and recommendations for adequate intake of vitamin D. Vitamin D3 (cholecalciferol) is considered to be the best source in supplements. The National Osteoporosis Foundation recommends that adults under 50 years should have an intake of 400 to 800 international units (iu) daily, and people over 50 take 800 to 1000 ius daily. The American Academy of pediatrics recommends 200 ius daily from birth to 18 years and that infants who are exclusively or partially breast fed receive a supplement of 400 ius per day.

There is no doubt that vitamin D is important and most of us do not get enough of it. If you have risk factors for vitamin D insufficiency or deficiency you can get levels checked. There is a test, 25(OH)D, that determines serum vitamin D levels. Talk to your health care provider about your risk and recommendations. Remember that it is important to get enough vitamin D and there are definite health risks to not getting enough. It is also important to know that too much vitamin D can be toxic, so never take more than the recommended dose.

The most important things to focus on are a healthy diet, regular exercise, to know your risk factors and use vitamin D supplementation when appropriate.

For more information about building a healthful diet refer to "dietary guidelines. For Americans" go to: <http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/document/default.htm>

For more information on vitamin D, go to the National Osteoporosis Foundation at: www.nof.org or go to the American Academy of Pediatrics website at: www.aap.org

As always you can contact us at health@the-independent.net.

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Number to call with flu questions

Columbia County Health District urges residents with questions about the H1N1 Virus, vaccination sites and clinics to contact the State of Oregon Public Inquiry Line at 1-800-978-3040 for answers to any and all questions regarding the Virus.

"Many County residents are calling local clinics in Columbia County with general questions on the H1N1 Virus, the status of the vaccine supply, and/or flu symptoms. The influx of phone

calls to local clinics is creating a lot of extra work for health care providers who are very busy," said Columbia County Health Preparedness Coordinator Anne Parrott. She recommends that residents call 1-800-978-3040 for information.

Columbia County Health district suggests that residents should contact their health care provider if they are experiencing flu symptoms such as a fever or if they have other exacerbating health care issues.

Learn about diabetes at free Chat

Diabetes and Self-Care is the topic of a free 90-minute Evening Chat presentation to be held on Thursday, October 22, starting at 6:00 p.m. at Tuality Health Education Center, 334 SE 8th Ave., Hillsboro.

Managing your diabetes is

not only about exercise, eating right, and checking blood sugar. Your skin, feet, teeth and eyes demand attention, too! Learn all aspects of diabetes self-care at this presentation.

Call 503-681-1700 if you plan to attend.

New guidelines for drug disposal

Do you know what to do with your unwanted or out-of-date pharmaceuticals and medications? The Washington County Cooperative Recycling Program provides the following information.

Flushing medication down the toilet or drain is not the answer because this can cause water quality issues. Wastewater treatment plants and septic systems usually do not treat, or only partially treat, pharmaceuticals, so chemical compounds pass through treatment plants or septic systems to our rivers or groundwater.

First – Hold on to the expired medication until a pharmaceutical take-back program is developed and implemented in your County.

Second – Place the medication in your trash which will be sent to the landfill. Landfills in our area have many protective measures in place to prevent chemical seepage into the soil, such as a composite liner and a leachate collection and removal system.

Third – Follow the Oregon Department of Environmental

Quality (DEQ) suggested guidelines for disposal outlined below.

DEQ suggests unused medicines be disposed of in the garbage.

- Keep waste pharmaceuticals in their original containers with their labels (remove/conceal any patient information if you have privacy concerns.)

- Tape the lid on the container if it is not childproof and there are children in the home.

- Place waste pharmaceuticals in a plastic, sealable bag, especially if liquid.

- Place waste pharmaceuticals in durable packaging that masks the content, such as a brown cardboard box.

- Place waste pharmaceuticals in the trash as close to garbage pick-up time as possible.

Contact the DEQ hazardous waste duty officer at 503-229-5263 for more information. Learn more at DEQ's Household Pharmaceutical Waste Disposal fact sheet: <http://www.deq.state.or.us/lq/pubs/factsheets/sw/HouseholdPharmaceuticalWasteDisposal.pdf>

**Have a safe and
Happy Halloween**