

Nutrition News & Notes

Vitamin D Deficiency Emerges As New Epidemic Experts Offer Milk and Sunlight as Easy Solutions to the Growing Problem

(NAPSA)—Medical experts are talking about a new health epidemic—one that most thought was eliminated decades ago. It's a lack of vitamin D. The surprising deficiency is increasing the risk of osteoporosis and accounting for the re-emergence of rickets in children.

Called the sunshine vitamin because people make their own when sunlight hits the skin, vitamin D is also found in milk, one of the few food sources for this nutrient. With people spending more time indoors, especially as cold weather approaches, and the frequent swapping of milk for soda, Americans aren't getting the vitamin D they need.

According to Michael Holick, M.D., Ph.D., a leading vitamin D researcher and professor at Boston University, it is a problem for teenagers, men and women and a particular problem for African Americans, who are not getting the calcium they need. "Lower intake of vitamin D-fortified foods, particularly milk, coupled with an increased use of sunblock to reduce exposure to sunlight are the driving factors placing our nation and it's children at risk for vitamin D-related diseases," he said.

In addition to increased rates of bone-related disease such as rickets and osteoporosis, mounting research now links chronic vitamin D-deficiency with increased risks of certain cancers, diabetes, hypertension and diseases of the immune system.

Drink Up

Experts say one of the best ways to meet vitamin D requirements—200 international units, or IU, for adults up to age 50—is by drinking milk, which is fortified with the nutrient. An eight-ounce glass provides 50 percent of the daily need of vitamin D and 30 percent of the daily calcium



requirement. Vitamin D can double the amount of calcium absorbed by your body, and enhances bone mineralization.

Bone health expert Robert Heaney, M.D. of Creighton University says milk is the preferred source of vitamin D because it is rich in calcium and protein, which are also important bone builders.

"Teens who forego milk in favor of soft drinks may be setting themselves up for long-term trouble if undetected. Untreated vitamin D deficiency puts them at risk for stunted growth and fractures," he adds.

How to Get Enough?

Teens and adults need to drink more vitamin D fortified milk—at least three servings a day. Today milk comes in more varieties and grab-and-go packaging than ever before. There are flavored, fat-free and reduced-fat milks to suit every taste and dietary need. In addition, public health experts

urge everyone to get outside and get some sun. Besides the vitamin D, daily physical activity helps promote good health.

The National Milk Mustache "got milk?"® Campaign is jointly funded by America's milk processors and dairy farmers: the MilkPEP Board in Washington, D.C., and Dairy Management Inc., Rosemont, Illinois. The goal of the multi-faceted campaign is to educate consumers on the benefits of milk and to raise milk consumption. A series of educational brochures is available by visiting the milk Web site at www.why.milk.com. Lowe Worldwide New York is the creative agency for The National Milk Mustache "got milk?"® Campaign.

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