

The Sunny Side of Vitamin D

Athlete Scenerio

Last season, my college swim team had bone scans. I drink milk and was surprised that my bones were not as strong as they should be. My vitamin D level was low, which could negatively affect my health. What are the benefits of having adequate vitamin D? How can I raise my vitamin D level?

Benefits of Adequate Vitamin D

- Promote bone health and muscle function
- Promote optimal immune function
- Reduce exercise-related inflammation
- Enhance recovery from injury

Goals for Adequate Vitamin D

- Vitamin D status is determined by blood levels of 25-hydroxyvitamin D. Although optimal levels of vitamin D have not been established, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) recommends a blood concentration of at least 50 nmol/L for bone health. There is some evidence that 100 nmol/L may be needed to optimize immune function and reduce inflammation.
- The body can synthesize vitamin D from sun exposure. Expose your arms, legs and trunk to the sun between the hours of 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. (or artificial UVB radiation) for 5-30 minutes, 2-3 times per week. For any sun exposure longer than this, apply sunscreen to minimize the risk of skin cancer.
- Consume vitamin D-rich foods, such as meat and egg yolks (preferably from sun-exposed, free range animals), & vitamin D fortified foods (milk, soy milk, yogurt, cheese, margarine, orange juice, ready-to-eat cereals, & UV-exposed mushrooms).
- Vitamin D supplementation may be needed if your blood level is low and especially during winter if you live in the northern half of the United States. The IOM considers 4,000 IU of vitamin D supplement/day as the upper limit of safe intake. Consult your physician before taking a vitamin D supplement.

Written by SCAN registered dietitian nutritionists (RDN) to provide nutrition guidance. The key to optimal meal planning is individualization. For personalized nutrition plans contact a SCAN sports dietitian or Board Certified Specialist in Sports Dietetics (CSSD) by accessing "Find a SCAN Dietitian" at www.scandpg.org



Tips to Take With You

1. Consume vitamin D-rich foods and obtain safe sun exposure. You can make vitamin D when your shadow is shorter than you are.
2. Have your vitamin D level assessed, preferably during the winter months.
3. If your vitamin D level is low, seek assistance from a sports registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) or other qualified medical health professional. Recheck vitamin D status in three months.

Contact SCAN

www.scandpg.org

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