

Health

Get the D you need

Make sure you get all the Vitamin D you need in your diet for optimal health. *by Karen Giles-Smith*

In one of my favorite TV commercials, a man in a milk carton costume is heckling a group of guys shooting hoops and guzzling sports drinks. "You want D? You need me!" says Milk Carton Guy.

It's true that milk is an excellent source of vitamin D: 98 percent of milk sold in retail stores is fortified with vitamin D (check the label). But even if you drink three cups of milk a day, you're probably not getting enough vitamin D. Fact is, it's difficult to get the D you need through diet.

Your skin manufactures vitamin D when exposed to sunlight. Experts suggest getting about 15 minutes of direct sun daily before applying sunscreen, unless you have sun-sensitive skin or are at risk for skin cancer.

But in places where the sun doesn't shine (much) such as Michigan, nearly everyone is "D-ficient" unless taking a vitamin D supplement, according to Henry Bone, MD, endocrinologist and director

of Michigan Bone and Mineral Clinic.

The recommendation for vitamin D intake from the Institute of Medicine is 200-600 International Units (IUs) daily, depending on age.

However, recent research indicates people need more in order to prevent osteoporosis, heart disease, cancers, depression and diabetes—probably 1,000 IUs, maybe even 2,000 IUs of vitamin D daily.

Let's say that today you ate several foods high in vitamin D: cereal with milk, an egg, salmon, vitamin D-fortified yogurt and two glasses of milk. Although you'd get about 800 IUs of vitamin D, you probably won't get close to the new goal of 1,000 IUs every day. You may need a vitamin D supplement. Keep in mind that it's possible to get too much of a good thing—large doses from supplements can be toxic.

Talk to your doctor or registered dietitian about vitamin D. A simple blood test can assess your vitamin D status.

What/who is a R.D.?

When in need of credible nutrition information and advice, look to a registered dietitian (R.D.). Registered dietitians are experts in food, nutrition and health. They have obtained the education, experience and expertise required to achieve and maintain R.D. credentials.

- An undergraduate degree (B.A. or B.S.) in nutrition science from an accredited college or university. Many R.D.s hold higher degrees such as a Masters or Ph.D.
- Completion of a mandatory internship (typically 9-12 months) in which practical experience is obtained in a clinical setting.
- Passing a national comprehensive exam given by the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR).
- Completion of CDR-approved and monitored continuing education.

For more information, visit Michigan Dietetic Association's Web site (eatrightmich.org) and American Dietetic Association's Web site (eatright.org).



Karen Giles-Smith, M.S., R.D. is a freelance writer based in Mason and a registered dietitian with a master's in human nutrition. Her 20-year career in the field of nutrition includes clinical dietetics and nutrition education. For more visit www.TheWellnessWriter.com.

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