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NUTRITION SEGMENT JUNE 16TH, 2008: SUNSHINE VITAMIN D

We are approaching the longest day of the year, which is the perfect time to talk about the sunshine vitamin – Vitamin D! Our body is able to produce vitamin D by reacting with the sun's ultraviolet rays. Brighten your day by learning more about vitamin D.

WHAT IS IT? A fat-soluble vitamin that we need to maintain proper calcium and phosphorus levels in the blood. Vitamin D promotes calcium absorption, which helps form and maintain strong bones.

HOW DO WE GET IT:

SUN: The main source is from the sun. The current recommendation is 10-15 minutes of midday sun on hands, legs or arms a couple days a week. Many factors affect vitamin D synthesis like season, latitude, time of day, cloud cover, pollution and sunscreen. Sunscreen over SPF 8 appears to inhibit vitamin D from being synthesized. There is debate among some medical professionals about the benefits of vitamin D versus the risk of sun exposure without sunscreen. The decision is up to you and your healthcare provider or dermatologist. If you want a break during your lunch hour, you can take a brisk 10-minute walk with exposed hands, legs and arms to make vitamin D and then get that sunscreen on.

FOOD: Vitamin D is a bit hard to get from food. Good sources are vitamin D-fortified milk, (2 cups a day), salmon (3 ounces), vitamin D-fortified cereals, orange juice or some yogurts and egg.

HOW MUCH DO WE NEED? The dietary reference intake (DRI) set by the Food and Nutrition Board for vitamin D is 200 IU for people 19-50 years, 400 IU for people 51-70 years and 600 IU for people over 71 years.

WHAT'S NEW? Recent research has shown a correlation between vitamin D intake and decreased risk for cancer, diabetes and multiple sclerosis. Research has not proven anything but it has been enough to get many health professionals, researchers and scholars to discuss increasing the recommended amount to 1000 IU.

WHAT TO DO: Summer in Boise allows us a chance to get enough vitamin D from the sun. A multi-vitamin usually has 400 IU which is helpful so you may want to consider taking a basic multi every day if you don't get safe sun a couple days a week or drink milk. You may want to consider a D3 supplement if you are older than 50 years. Talk to your physician before you add any supplement to your current regimen. *Call Stacy at St Luke's Health Solutions with any questions. 381-2403.*