



**Summer is here!**  
**Time to get your**  
**Vitamin D, the**  
**“Sunshine Vitamin”!**

For many years now, doctors have understood the importance of Vitamin D in strengthening bones. In adults, low levels of vitamin D can cause osteoporosis, which is a decrease in bone mass and bone tissue that increases risk of fractures. And in children this same illness is called Rickets. Vitamin D helps your body absorb and utilize the calcium in your diet and calcium supplements.

However, a multitude of new research is showing that Vitamin D is essential for the health of the whole body, not just bones! For instance, the American Journal of Preventive Medicine published in March 2007 that taking 2,000 international units (IU) of vitamin D daily along with 10 to 15 minutes in the sun and a healthy diet can reduce the incidence of colorectal cancer by two-thirds<sup>1</sup>.

Vitamin D supplementation, along with a little sunshine and a healthy diet can decrease the risk of colorectal cancer by two-thirds.

Another recent study also found that women who took 1100 IU of Vitamin D daily with their calcium supplement for a four year period had a dramatically lower cancer incidence than those not taking Vitamin D.<sup>2</sup>

Women taking Vitamin D and calcium had lower incidences of breast, colon, lung, and uterine cancer, lymphoma, leukemia and myeloma.

In addition to cancer research, there is evidence indicating that a deficiency in Vitamin D may play a role in autoimmune diseases. Vitamin D deficiency has been associated with an increased risk for developing multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, juvenile diabetes and inflammatory bowel disease.<sup>3</sup>

Vitamin D is also very important for children.

Last year, a study found that children who are exposed regularly to sunlight are less likely to catch colds and respiratory infections.<sup>4</sup>

A separate 2006 study, published in the journal Science, suggested that Vitamin D might boost the body's production of naturally occurring antibiotics.<sup>5</sup>

Although some foods are fortified with Vitamin D, our most readily available source is the sun. Our skin contains the precursor to Vitamin D, and when the sun's rays hit our skin, our body can then convert this precursor into Vitamin D. Therefore, it is especially important for Canadians to be aware of their Vitamin D levels since we live in a northern climate and spend most of our time indoors. The use of sunblock lotion, especially in children, makes it even more difficult to obtain adequate Vitamin D. People who cover most of their skin for religious or cultural reasons are also at a greater risk for Vitamin D deficiency. Furthermore, the skin's ability to produce Vitamin D drops with age, putting men and women over the age of 50 at particular risk.

Obviously, suntanning has its own health risks and it is **not** recommended to fully expose yourself to the summer sun. Generally, doctors recommend that 10 to 15 minutes outdoors without sunscreen at least twice a week is adequate. Even healthier than using sunscreen, is covering up with light fabrics that shade your skin but don't cause you to over-heat. Wearing a hat is also essential to prevent heatstroke and dehydration during summer months.

Since evidence is building for the many healthy effects of Vitamin D, it is recommended for Canadians to take additional Vitamin D (1000-2000 IU daily) in a supplement form. Depending on your skin colour and other health conditions, the recommended daily dose will vary. In general, those with darker skin need to take more Vitamin D since their skin is less able to make vitamin D.

So get out there and enjoy the sun! Just remember to do it responsibly, making sure not to get too much of a good thing!

**References:**

1. Optimal Vitamin D Status for Colorectal Cancer Prevention - A Quantitative Meta Analysis. American Journal of Preventive Medicine, Vol 32, Issue 3, Pp 210-216 E. Gorham, C. , *et al.*
2. Vitamin D and calcium supplementation reduces cancer risk: results of a randomized trial. American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, Vol 85, Issue 6, Pp 1586-1591, June 2007. Joan M Lappe, *et al.*
3. Dysfunction of the vitamin D endocrine system as common cause for multiple malignant and other chronic diseases. Anticancer Res. 2006 Jul-Aug;26(4A):2581-8. Review. Peterlik, M and Cross, HS.
4. Epidemic influenza and vitamin D. Epidemiology and Infection 136(December 2006):1129-1140. Cannell, J.J., *et al.*
5. Toll-like receptor triggering of a vitamin D-mediated human antimicrobial response. Science 311(March 24 2006):1770-1773. Liu, P.T., *et al.*



## Healthy Summer Eating

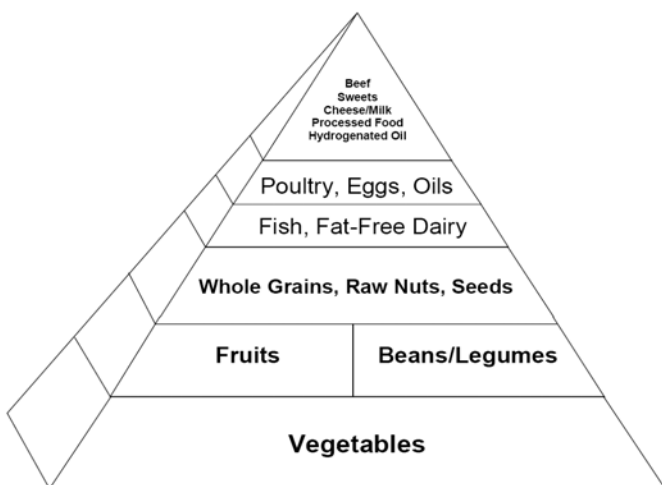
Take advantage of fresh summer vegetables and fruits as part of your healthy diet! This is the perfect time to nourish yourself with all the vitamins, minerals and antioxidants that are naturally found in fresh fruits and vegetables.



Also remember to keep hydrated during these hot summer months. It is generally recommended for adults to drink 2 litres of pure water per day. That doesn't include the liquid in pop, juice, coffee, beer or other alcoholic drinks! We need pure water to rehydrate our bodies from the water lost through sweating.

Whether you are cooking a wholesome meal at home, preparing food for a summer picnic, or are eating at a restaurant, keep nutrition in mind. This Health Eating Pyramid is an easy guide to base your food selections on. The majority of our diet should be composed of vegetables and fruits, with the addition of adequate amounts of whole grains and healthy proteins and fats. So, eat larger amounts of the foods at the bottom of the pyramid, and progressively smaller quantities as you go up the pyramid.

## Healthy Eating Pyramid



## Naturopathic Medicine - Spring Open House

Thank you for helping to make my spring Open House such a great success! It was a fun and educational day of socializing and healthy food!



I wish you a very happy and healthy summer! Be active, eat well and remember to take the time to relax and treat yourself to your favourite summer activities!

In good health,

Dr. Amanda Guthrie, ND