

## Sunshine Vitamin Isn't Just Kid Stuff

WASHINGTON — Vitamin D deficiency among the elderly, especially those who live in northern climates, may be a major unrecognized public health problem, an endocrinologist at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging reports.

"They are not getting enough of the vitamins from their diets—especially milk— or from brief exposures to summer sun," said Dr. Michael F. Holick. "Sun exposure should be brief," he cautioned, "to avoid risk of skin cancer." USDA's Agricultural

Research Service funds the center, based at Tufts University, Boston.

Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium from the intestinal tract and maintains blood levels essential for proper mineralization of the bone, Holick explained. Deficiency in adults leads to softening of the bone, or osteomalacia, compounding the problem of bone loss, or osteoporosis, in the elderly.

"A vitamin D deficiency in people afflicted with osteoporosis may significantly increase the risk of bone fractures," he said.

In a study of 142 patients en-

tering Boston's Massachusetts General Hospital with fractured hips, 30 to 40 percent had little or none of the circulating form of vitamin D in their blood, said Holick. He said that other studies, both in the United States and Great Britain, indicate a similar 30 to 40 percent of men and women with hip fractures are vitamin D deficient.

People begin losing bone mass during their thirties, leading to a weakened, sponge-like bone structure in later years. Although osteoporosis is accelerated in postmenopausal women. "All

people have it sooner or later," he said.

"The major cause of age-related vitamin D deficiency is a decrease in milk consumption," Holick said. "Relatively few other foods contain vitamin D." He said a substantial number of elderly develop an intolerance to milk, and others believe there is no need for milk—that it's only for children.

Four 8-ounce glasses of milk a day provides the Recommended Daily Allowance of 400 international units of vitamin D, he said. Depending on the fat content, 32 ounces of milk also supply about

1,200 milligrams of calcium— or one-third more than the RDA for calcium for men and women over age 18.

People who can't tolerate milk should take a vitamin D supplement or spend more time in the summer sun, Holick said. As people age, the ability of sun to stimulate the manufacture of vitamin D in the skin progressively decreases. And, in northern latitudes, such as Boston, vitamin D synthesis stops completely in the winter, he said.

To get the benefits of summer sunlight and minimize its detrimental effects, Holick recommends light-skinned elderly people restrict exposure to 5 to 10 minutes around midday in June when the sun's rays are most direct. Exposure can be longer when the angle of the sun is lower.

Dark-skinned people, however, require five to 10 times longer in the sun, depending on the amount of pigmentation, he said. In laboratory tests, it took a dose of radiation that would produce a severe sunburn in Caucasians to increase vitamin D levels in black skin.

Holick also found that protective lotions called sunblocks are true to their name. The products with a high protection index completely prevent the skin from producing vitamin D.

## Moldy Food — Dangerous and Distasteful

NEWARK, Del. — Moldy rye bread is often suggested as the cause of the colonial Salem witch-hunt hysteria. Moldy peanut meal caused a massive poisoning of farm animals in England in the 1950s. And moldy overwintered grain eaten by some Russians during World War II caused a surprising outbreak of an oft fatal blood disease.

The culprit in all these cases is the potentially hazardous substances produced by molds called mycotoxins. The word comes from the Greek "mykes" for fungus and the Latin "toxicum" for poison—literally fungus poison.

Because molds can grow on a variety of substances and under a diversity of heat and moisture conditions, most foods are susceptible to invasion by molds during production, processing, transport or storage. If mold

grows, there is a potential for mycotoxin production, says Dr. Sue Snider, University of Delaware extension food and nutrition specialist.

Perhaps the most widely known and dangerous of the mycotoxins are the aflatoxins. In fact, aflatoxin B1 is one of the most potent carcinogens known to man, says Snider.

The items most susceptible to aflatoxin contamination in the U.S. have been peanuts, corn and cottonseed. But the toxin has been found in such processed and prepared foods as cheeses, cooked meats, ham, salami sausage, dry beans and even refrigerated or frozen pastries.

Because no safe tolerance levels have been found for any of the mycotoxins, the FDA has set what it considers to be practical limits for aflatoxins in foods and seeds.

Most U.S. food processors have also established rigorous programs to monitor aflatoxins in their raw materials and prevent their presence in finished products. But the wise consumer should be aware of the potential dangers of moldy foods and take steps to prevent molds from forming on food at home.

"Proper storage is really the most important factor," Snider says. "Lower temperatures tend to retard mold growth, so if you have a lot of bread, for example, freezing is the best thing to do with it."

Not all molds are dangerous,

says the specialist. In fact some molds are used in the production of foods such as blue cheese. However, if a food has an uncharacteristic mold growth on it, it should be discarded.

"People used to think they could just cut off the mold," Snider notes. "But part of the mold can grow deep within the food and is not visible. So just cutting off an outside layer of mold isn't a safe practice."

If an item purchased from a store shows mold, Snider suggests that you return it to the distributor for replacement or ask for your money back.

SULBRA DHIA November 1986					
Name	Breed	No Cows	% Days in Milk	Lbs. Milk	Lbs Fat
D & D Hottenstein		3	64.5	85.2	19,747 729
Joan M Woodhead		3	33.4	86.1	18,986 715
Raymond Norconk		3	42.8	86.5	20,181 698
Richard R Higley		3	87.3	86.1	17,806 697
Lambert Farms		3	136.0	90.2	19,121 692
John & Marvin Brown		3	47.1	83.6	17,759 671
Bobwood Acres		3	45.1	90.7	19,808 650
William B Hart		3	86.6	88.7	17,944 639
Ronald Hembury		3	100.0	86.4	17,295 608
Mount Top Vue Fm		3	70.8	85.1	15,819 580
Earl & James Warburton		3	88.8	88.9	15,932 568

Completed lactations of 850 pounds or more of fat

D and D Hottenstein					
Tavia	3	4.02	305	29,177	3.9 1124
William B Hart					
95	3	4.06	305	22,611	3.8 864
Richard R Higley					
Seleta	3	4.03	305	20,282	4.2 854



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