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 dietsespecially 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

NEWARK, Del. - Moldy rye

bread is often suggested as the

cause of the colonial Salem wit-

chhunt 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

The culprit in all these cases is

the potentially hazardous sub-

stances produced by molds called

mycotoxins. The word comes from

the Greek "mykes" for fungus and

the Latin "toxicum" for poison -

literally fungus poison.

Name

Service

Breed

blood disease.

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 vitamın 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,

people have it sooner or later," he

"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 milkthat 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

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 progessively 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

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

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.

Lbs

Fat

729

Lititz, PA 17543

Most U.S. food processors have 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

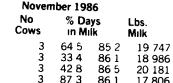
Not all molds are dangerous,

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.

Because molds can grow on a variety of substances and under a diversity of heat and moisture Because no safe tolerance levels conditions, most foods are have been found for any of the mycotoxins, the FDA has set what susceptible to invasion by molds during production, processing, it considers to be practical limits transport or storage. If mold for aflatoxins in foods and seeds.



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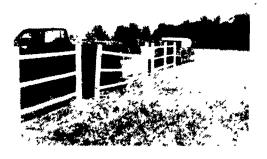




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