

Focus on Vitamin D in the Winter

It's hard to not feel the winter blues when the temperatures dip into the teens with a bitter wind chill. But something that could be contributing to these winter blues is low Vitamin D levels. Research has shown that greater than 40% of the American population has a Vitamin D deficiency; and this is not just a seasonal concern.

Vitamin D is best known for its importance in bone health, but it is also needed for other functions in the body including reducing inflammation, cell growth, immune function, muscle and nerve communication, and blood sugar regulation. Low Vitamin D has also been linked with depression symptoms and joint pain. The recommended intake is an average of 800 IU daily

A common source of Vitamin D is sunlight. Type B UV (UVB) radiation from the sun is absorbed in uncovered skin and through a series of steps becomes vitamin D₃ in the body. Some experts suggest that approximately 5–30 minutes of sun exposure, particularly between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., either daily or at least twice a week to the face, arms, hands, and legs without sunscreen usually leads to enough vitamin D production. Season, time of day, length of day, cloud cover, and sunscreen are factors that affect this UV radiation exposure and ability to convert enough vitamin D. Another interesting factor to consider is that UVB radiation does not penetrate glass, so exposure to sunshine indoors through a window does not produce vitamin D.

Since most of us are not out getting the sunlight needed for Vitamin D in the winter months, it is important to rely more on dietary sources to boost your numbers. Fish is a great place to start. Salmon ranks in the highest at 570 IU for a 3 ounce portion. Many milks and cereals are fortified with Vitamin D, including amounts of about 80-120 IU per serving. Eggs also have Vitamin D but only in the yolk - each large egg providing about 45 IU. Another odd source of Vitamin D is mushrooms. If grown in UV lighting, half a cup of white mushrooms can have over 350 IU packed inside.

Vitamin supplements may also be considered. It is always best to seek advice from your medical provider or dietitian on the right product and dose for you.



Asparagus-Mushroom Frittata

Prep Time: 10 minutes | Cook Time: 20 minutes | Serves: 4

Ingredients: 1 bunch asparagus, 8 oz mushrooms, 4 eggs, 1/2 cup milk, 1/4 cup cheese, salt, pepper.

Instructions: Preheat oven to 375°F. Sauté asparagus and mushrooms in butter. Whisk eggs and milk. Pour mixture into a greased pan, top with cheese. Bake for 20 minutes.

Notes: Add a pinch of nutmeg for extra flavor. Use any type of cheese you like.

Recipe by: [Your Name] | Date: [Today's Date]