

MACDONALD CENTER FOR OBESITY PREVENTION AND EDUCATION

COLLEGE OF NURSING | VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY



VILLANOVA
UNIVERSITY
College of Nursing

We all know that consuming adequate amounts of vitamins and minerals is important to keeping us healthy, especially during cold and flu season. Know which foods give you the best bang for your buck when it comes to Vitamin D and Vitamin C – two important vitamins to keep everyone healthy and happy during the long winter months!

Vitamin D

The basics: Vitamin D is made in the body when sunlight hits the skin, but also found naturally in some foods and is added to other foods like milk and orange juice. During dark winter days, we typically do not get adequate amounts of sun exposure so the body makes less Vitamin D than it typically does during the summer. It is important that your family eats food rich in Vitamin D all year round but pay close attention especially during this time of year.

The amount: It is recommended that individuals 1 to 70 years old get the same amount – 15 micrograms or 600 International Units (IUs). Do not get hung up on the numbers – do your best to provide your family with a varied diet that offers Vitamin D rich foods using the information below.

The top sources:

1. *Fortified milks* (both dairy and non-dairy): Dairy milk and yogurts are fortified with 100 IU per 8-oz (1 cup). Many but not all non-dairy or plant-based milks, like Almond or Soy, are also fortified but be sure to read the label if you want a fortified product.
2. *Fortified orange juice*: Like non-dairy milk, not all orange juice is fortified but many are. Orange juice is usually fortified with calcium. One caveat about orange juice - freshly squeezed juices do not contribute vitamin D to the diet. Read labels to confirm fortification.
3. *Salmon*: One of the best sources of Vitamin D and a great dinner option for families! A 3-oz serving, depending on the variety, can contribute between ~450-950 IU of Vitamin D. Try to choose wild or sockeye varieties.
4. Looking for lunch ideas for the kids that pack a Vitamin D punch? Try *canned tuna* (with some bread or crackers of course!). A 4-oz can typically contains ~150 IU Vitamin D. Choose tuna canned in water versus oil and mix with honey mustard, salsa, or light mayonnaise for added flavor.
5. *Whole eggs*: While not a huge contributor of Vitamin D, whole eggs contribute ~40 IU each. The Vitamin D is found in the yolk so make sure you eat the whole egg not just the white! Making eggs or omelets a couple times a week is a great meal option that not only provides Vitamin D, but protein, B-Vitamins and omega-3s (also known as healthy fats).

Vitamin C

The basics: Vitamin C is a water soluble vitamin, meaning it dissolves in water and is not stored by the body. Excess amounts are eliminated in the urine which means you need a continuous supply in your diet to keep levels adequate – this is unlike Vitamin D which can be stored in the body for months. Vitamin C is necessary for normal growth and development, helps wound healing, and more commonly known to help with immunity and ward off colds. Vitamin C cannot prevent colds, but research does show it may reduce the amount of time you have a cold and lessen the severity of cold symptoms.

The amount: It is recommended that boys and girls ages 4 to 8 get 25 milligrams per day; 9 to 13 years old get 45 milligrams per day; 14 to 18 years old get 65 to 75 milligrams per day and individuals over 19 years old get 75 to 90 milligrams per day.

The top sources:

1. *Fruit and vegetables:* the best sources of Vitamin C are some of the healthiest foods out there for your family. Grapefruit, oranges and Brussel sprouts are great choices which are in season right now!
2. *Broccoli, spinach and green leafy vegetables.* These may be hard to convince your kids to eat, but try roasting broccoli, making home-made kale chips or throwing in a pack of frozen spinach or kale into a mac and cheese recipe.
3. Sweet potatoes – try mashed sweet potatoes instead of using regular white potatoes. Or make your own sweet potato fries or chips for a healthy version of your kids' favorite foods.

Submitted by:

Rebecca Shenkman MPH RDN LDN

Interim Director

MacDonald Center for Obesity Prevention and Education