

Prairie Fare: Wintry days and the vitamin D dilemma

We were seated at a sunny table in a restaurant recently. Brightness on a cold winter day always boosts people's moods.

When I sat in the booth, unfortunately, the sun was lasering my eyes. All the tables were full, so we could not move to a different spot. The window had no shade. I could barely see my husband across the table.

My husband noticed me moving my head from side to side as I tried to use him as a sun shield. I moved closer to the window on the side of our booth, but the wall was ice cold.

"Do you want to switch places?" he asked gallantly.

"No, I should be OK," I said

as I put on my coat and slid next to the wall.

"The sun will move out of the way soon," he reassured me.

On a positive side, I wondered if my skin was making any vitamin D, also called "the sunshine vitamin."

Unfortunately, sunlight through windows or windshields is not a reliable way to get vitamin D in the winter.

When my scrambled eggs and toast arrived, the glare from the sun was gone. Eggs, by the way, are a good source of vitamin D. Even if my skin wasn't making very much vitamin D, at least my breakfast was providing some.

In the 1930s, E.V. McCollum, a faculty member at the institu-

tion that would become Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, discovered vitamin D. At the time, a severe bone-softening disease was common among children, especially in the northern U.S. Rickets can lead to the bowing of legs and disability.

Adding vitamin D to milk became a public health measure that helped eradicate rickets. Having a spoonful of cod liver oil was another, probably less palatable, method for earlier generations to get their vitamin D and protect their growing bones.

People with dark skin, those with conditions that limit fat absorption (celiac disease, Crohn's disease), exclusively breastfed infants and those who have undergone gastric bypass surgery may be at risk of low vitamin D.

We all need vitamin D. Vitamin D plays several other roles in our body. It helps the immune system fend off bacteria and viruses, and it helps nerves fire and muscles contract.

It works with calcium and other nutrients to keep our bones strong throughout life, plus it serves numerous other functions. It may reduce our

risk for certain types of cancer. It may reduce cognitive decline and multiple sclerosis, but studies are ongoing.

In some studies, low levels of vitamin D have been linked to depression and diabetes; however, the study results are conflicting. In other words, taking vitamin D is not a treatment for these diseases.

Read Nutrition Facts labels because vitamin D levels are listed on many products. Unfortunately, most foods have no vitamin D unless it is added. Besides fortified milk, fortified breakfast cereals can be a good source.

Some foods naturally contain vitamin D, including egg yolks, and fatty fish such as salmon, sardines and mackerel.

Be sure to visit with your health care provider, who might order tests to determine vitamin D levels. Most of us in the upper Midwest probably need a vitamin D supplement at the level suggested by our health care provider.

However, too much vitamin D through supplements can be harmful and result in muscle weakness, heart rhythm issues, kidney stones and other issues.

As we briskly walked through

the parking lot to our car on that cold, sunny day, I was happy we had added a vitamin D supplement to our daily regimen.

This vitamin D-rich recipe and nutrition analysis is courtesy of the Iowa State University's "Spend Smart. Eat Smart." program. Rinsing canned fish in a colander can reduce the sodium content. Complete your meal with sliced fruit and a glass of vitamin D-fortified milk.

Salmon Wraps
4 ounces low-fat cream cheese (Neufchatel)
1 (14.75-ounce) can salmon (or tuna)

3 tablespoons light Italian dressing
1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
6 (8-inch) whole-wheat tortillas

1 tomato
1 cucumber
1 1/2 cups romaine lettuce or spinach leaves, rinsed

Soften cream cheese at room temperature or microwave for 10 seconds. Wipe top of can before opening. Drain salmon in a colander and rinse with water. Add salmon, dressing and pepper to cream cheese. Stir to blend. Spread 1/3 cup filling on each tortilla. Spread to the edges. Slice tomato into thin slices, then slice in half. Cut cucumbers in half lengthwise. Scoop out seeds. Lay on flat side and cut into narrow strips. Place lettuce or spinach leaves on top of filling in center of tortilla. Top with tomato and cucumber. Roll up tightly. Serve immediately or refrigerate.

Makes six servings (1 wrap each). Each serving has 280 calories, 11 grams (g) fat, 20 g protein, 26 g carbohydrate, 4 g fiber and 740 milligrams sodium. It also has about 60% of the recommended daily value for vitamin D.

Submitted by Julie Garden-Robinson

January Student Award of Excellence



The Southeast Region Career & Technology Center has selected Marley Foss as one of the recipients of the January Student Award of Excellence. Marley is a junior at Oakes High School and is enrolled in Advanced EMT/PCT and is a member of the SRCTC HOSA Chapter. She is the daughter of Rocky and Tami Foss.

The Southeast Region Career and Technology Center Award of Excellence is public recognition of two students each month for academic excellence, outstanding service, a positive work ethic, and achievements that are above and beyond the call of duty, all the context of the learning environment associated with Career and Technical Education opportunities. The Southeast Region Career and Technology Center Board, staff, and administration are all partners in recognizing the "Best of the Best" among our student body through the Award of Excellence.

The criteria for selection shall include but not be limited to the following: academic achievement, leadership, work habits, volunteers, citizenship, involvement, youth group participation, reliability, trustworthiness, and maturity.

Any student enrolled in a Southeast Region Career and Technology Center class is eligible for consideration and nomination by their instructor or instructors. This award is not grade point or grade level sensitive.

Nominations will be made by the faculty each month and approved by the Southeast Region Career and Technology Center Board of Education.

Public Notices

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OEI 2025 ANNUAL MEETING NOTICE

The Annual Meeting for Oakes Enhancement, Inc. will take place prior to the regularly scheduled Board of Directors meeting: Thursday, March 12, 2026, at 7 am. The meeting will be held at the Oakes Community Center Meeting Suite. Dakota State Line Regional Alliance will be conducting business at this time.

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- The Oakes Times reserves the right to edit for length, taste and libel considerations. Letters must be 250 words or less and deal with only one topic.

- Be legible.

- Preference will be given to letters from the Dickey County area.

Letters from outside the area will be considered if they are of sufficient interest.

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Phone: 701-742-2361

E-Mail: oakestms@dtel.net • Mailing Address: 412 Main Ave Suite # 4

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