



More Vitamin D Benefits

Research Update

The evidence for vitamin D's potential health benefits keeps growing. We already know that the "sunshine vitamin" is important for the prevention of certain cancers, heart disease, autoimmune diseases and osteomalacia (softening of the bones). In a recent study, however, researchers have also found a link between vitamin D levels and blood pressure.

The study, which was published in the American Journal of Hypertension, looked at the blood pressure and vitamin D status of over 12,000 individuals. Vitamin D levels were inversely associated with blood pressure readings, meaning that the lower an individual's vitamin D, the higher their blood pressure tended to be, while higher levels of vitamin D were associated with lower blood pressure readings. The relationships were even stronger for those subjects who were older than 50. The researchers speculate that raising vitamin D levels in those who are deficient can help bring down blood pressure, and they plan to test that theory next.

We make vitamin D in our bodies via exposure to sunlight; people with darker skin require more sun exposure than those with lighter skin to make equivalent amounts. This may help explain the study's findings that people with darker skin had lower vitamin D levels and higher blood pressure than those with lighter skin. As more of us try to minimize our sun exposure and wear more sunscreen, however, our risk for vitamin D deficiency will rise, no matter how light our skin is. If you think that you may be deficient, ask your doctor to do a blood test for 25-hydroxy vitamin D. If your blood levels are low, your doctor will have you take synthetic vitamin D (vitamin D3) to help bring your levels into the healthy range.

Snack Time!

Snack time should occur twice a day, ideally half way between breakfast and lunch and again between lunch and dinner. Snacks can be small individual items, such as a piece of fruit, or they can be mini meals, like veggie quesadillas. They should contain between 60 and 200 calories, but they ought not be empty calories. Think of snacks as opportunities to boost your nutrient intake instead of occasions to indulge cravings.

Snacking is especially important for children and older adults because it supplements calories and nutrients that may not have been eaten at other meals. Children often can't eat enough to meet their nutritional needs at meals because their tummies don't hold a lot of food, and adults over 60 do not always eat three meals a day for reasons such as illness, disability, a tight budget, or flagging energy levels that prevent them from preparing food. Small simple snacks can be a boon for both of these populations.

Snacks are also good for people who are prone to hypoglycemia (low blood sugar), are trying to lose weight, are active or have diabetes. There is evidence that well-balanced snacks are great for helping to control appetite and the release of insulin. Using less insulin can, over time, help prevent type 2 diabetes. Controlling your appetite with the right snacks can help you eat less at subsequent meals, which may in turn lead to weight loss.

Finally, snacks can help give you an energy boost, especially if they include some combination of carbohydrates and protein. Eating between meals can be healthful for everyone if it is done with some planning. Be sure to pack snacks when you or your child leave the house in the morning. Otherwise, unplanned haphazard snacking can get you into nutritional and caloric trouble.

Eating well takes some strategizing, especially when you are preparing meals and snacks for

children. Kids do not need special foods, but they do have certain taste preferences for sweet foods and possible aversions to bitter foods, like vegetables. There has been a lot of research in this area and one recent study has confirmed that children need repeated exposure to



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vegetables (at least nine times, but 12 is better) before they start to like them. This is a very important piece of information since an estimated 70% of American children are not getting their five (half-cup) recommended daily servings of vegetables. Two and a half cups of vegetables a day is a lot, especially when combined with the recommended one and a half cups (three servings) of fruit a day. The high requirement of produce for health and optimal development underscores the importance of snacking—for both children and adults (who need even more produce than kids).

Another important new study has found that packaging and advertising can strongly influence children's taste preferences. Researchers fed young children hamburgers, chicken nuggets, French fries, 1% milk and baby carrots. The foods were wrapped in both plain packaging and in basic McDonald's packaging. Even though all of the food came from the same source, most of the children strongly preferred the taste of the foods

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Nutrition Notes *A Monthly Newsletter About Health and Nutrition*

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wrapped in the McDonald's packaging. The children with the strongest preferences for the McDonald's uncoincidentally watched the most television and ate fast food more often than the other kids. Advertising to children definitely works and, unfortunately, produce is rarely advertised—it's usually junk food manufacturers that can afford to promote their products. Instead of being defeated by the power of ads and wrapping your children's vegetables in McDonald's packaging, how about limiting their exposure to television and fast food? Television and advertisements are teaching kids about what to eat and, as a result, children are getting fatter and unhealthier every year. Parents, caregivers and teachers should reclaim the role of being the food and nutrition authorities. In lieu of time spent in front of the tube, occupy children by encouraging them to read books with positive produce themes, help you in your vegetable garden (it can be miniature) and help out in the kitchen when you prepare meals.

Foods that are marketed as snack foods are probably the same foods you want to avoid for snacks since they are often highly processed, high in calories, and nutrient poor. Your snacking philosophy should mirror your healthy eating philosophy: eat minimally processed foods that mostly come from plants and don't eat too much of anything. For great snacks, try the excellent foods I suggest here (eat them in larger quantities as part of a meal). The level of calories you need should be determined by how hungry you are and how large or small your next meal will be. If you want to eat less at your next meal, then try having a larger snack, but if you are eating well-balanced, satisfying meals, then a piece of fruit or a handful of cherry tomatoes may be all you need to tide you over. If you are active or need help with controlling your blood sugar, be sure to either have an item from the Stand-Alone category or combine one item from the Carbohydrates column with one item from the Proteins column. The miscellaneous foods are not "free foods," but a little bit goes a long way in perking up your snacks. The possibilities are endless...

Carbohydrates (1/2 - 1 ounce)	Proteins (serving sizes vary)	Miscellaneous (1-2 tablespoons)
Any veggies, especially cherry tomatoes, carrots, avocado, sugar snap peas, radishes, red and yellow bell pepper slices or endive (1/2 - 1 cup)	<i>Flanigan Farms</i> raw nuts, <i>Blue Diamond</i> almonds in 100 calorie bags, <i>Jo San</i> soy nuts or <i>Seapoint Farms</i> dry roasted edamame (1/4 cup)	<i>Gelson's Finest</i> or <i>Casa Sanchez</i> fresh salsa
Any fruit (1 piece or 1 cup)	<i>Fage Total</i> , <i>Horizon Organic</i> or <i>Stonyfield</i> organic plain fat-free yogurt (6 ounces)	<i>Garlic Expressions</i> or <i>Galeos</i> miso salad dressings
<i>Food for Life</i> sprouted whole-grain breads	<i>Horizon Organic</i> nonfat milk (4 - 8 ounces)	<i>Classico</i> tomato basil tomato sauce
<i>Guiltless Gourmet</i> baked blue corn tortilla chips	<i>Cedar Lane</i> hummus or homemade bean dip (1/4 - 1/2 cup)	<i>Sarabeth's</i> spreadable fruit jam
Whole-wheat pasta	<i>West Soy</i> unsweetened vanilla organic soy milk (4 - 8 ounces)	<i>Laughing Cow</i> light cheese
<i>Kashi TLC 7</i> whole grain and sesame or <i>Ak-Mak</i> crackers	<i>Boar's Head</i> low-sodium turkey breast or <i>Applegate Farms</i> sliced turkey or roast beef (1 ounce)	Imported grated <i>Parmigiano Reggiano</i>
<i>Newman's Own</i> organic spelt pretzels	Organic hardboiled egg (1 item)	Stand-Alone Snacks (perfectly balanced)
<i>Tropicana</i> or <i>Stretch Island</i> fruit leather bars	Cashew butter, almond butter, or peanut butter (2 tablespoons)	Muesli Bars (see my recipe card) (1 bar)
Corn tortillas	<i>Horizon Organic</i> low-fat or <i>Friendship</i> low-sodium cottage cheese (1/2 cup)	Unsalted dry roasted or raw nuts, <i>Jo San</i> soy nuts or <i>Seapoint Farms</i> dry roasted edamame (1/4 cup)
Whole-grain cereal with at least 5 grams of fiber, like <i>Kashi Go Lean Crunch</i> , <i>Heart to Heart</i> or granola	Low-fat cheese, like string cheese, part skim mozzarella, light Swiss cheese, <i>Farmer's</i> cheese or <i>Veggie Slices</i> soy cheese (1 ounce)	Spiced Edamame (see my recipe card) (1 cup)
Dried fruit, like raisins, plums or cherries	Edamame (1 cup in pods)	<i>Kashi TLC</i> chewy trail mix bars (1 bar)
		<i>Flanigan Farms</i> trail mix (1/4 cup)
		<i>Health Valley</i> organic lentil or minestrone soups (1 cup)
		Organic <i>Balck Bean Dip</i> (see my recipe card) (1/4 cup)
		<i>Amy's</i> organic vegetarian refried beans (1/2 cup)

A few great combos:

Cinna-Raisin Treat: spread *Farmer's* cheese on a slice of toasted *Food for Life* cinnamon raisin bread

Turkey on a Stick: wrap a slice of turkey breast around a carrot

Strawberry Milk: blend fresh or frozen strawberries with milk or soymilk (works with blueberries, too)

Nacho Pizza: spread a thin layer of tomato sauce on a corn tortilla and sprinkle with mozzarella or cheddar-flavored soy cheese and bake at 350° until cheese melts and tortilla crisps

Creamy Veggie Dip: stir fresh salsa into plain yogurt and add a little mashed avocado (optional); use as a dip for cut vegetables

Sweet Roast Beef: wrap a slice of roast beef around a piece of cherry fruit leather

Our registered dietitian has a Masters in Public Health. However, she is not a doctor and her nutritional recommendations are general in nature and not tailored to specific health problems. Talk to your physician or other qualified health care practitioners concerning particular health issues or before beginning any nutritional program.

Demystifying Food Labels

I frequently hear from customers, especially those that have nutrition-related health conditions such as diabetes or high cholesterol, that they don't know what to look for on food labels. Choosing the healthiest foods can be confusing, especially if you are unclear about what to focus on. There are so many choices available to us that selecting a product can be overwhelming and time-consuming, but with the right nutritional knowledge, a shopping trip to Gelson's can be a breeze. Use my tips to help make yourself over into a Super Shopper.

Tip #1 Buy ingredients, not food

Most of the items you buy should not come in packages; they should be minimally-processed foods that you combine and/or cook with other foods to create meals. That means that a frozen entrée meal is the polar opposite of what you want in your shopping cart. Fruits and vegetables should fill up at least half of the space in your shopping cart. Remember that you need to eat a rainbow of plant foods every day, so make sure you have a wide variety of colors in your basket. Seafood, poultry, lean meats and eggs can also have a place since they are excellent sources of minimally processed lean protein. When you do buy packaged food, look for the ones that are single ingredients such as "brown rice," "oats" and "kidney beans." This single ingredient rule might not be realistic for some items, so you can set a limit on the number of ingredients listed. Three to five is a good limit, with a few exceptions (some multi-grain breads and cereals list several different whole grains and nuts or seeds plus a few other ingredients like oil, water, honey and salt). If you want to buy tortilla chips, for example, go for the ones that list four ingredients instead of 12. Ingredients are listed according to weight, so the ingredients that contribute the most weight to the food are listed first and the ingredients that contribute the least weight are listed last. The first three ingredients should be the most nutritious. I don't mind you having some added sugar in your food, but if sugar is in the first three ingredients, then the food probably contains too much added sugar.

Tip #2 Ingredients are your guide

The names of products can be very seductive and misleading. Most foods want to sound like they promote health, so words like "smart," "nutri-," "healthy" and "light" are used in the names. Super Shoppers ignore everything on the front of packages and go straight to the back to do their detective work. When I pick up a packaged food, the first thing I look at is the ingredient list, not the Nutrition Facts panel. The ingredients really tell you more about the food than the numerical breakdowns do. They indicate the quality of the product and the degree to which it is processed. Since you are looking for high-quality, minimally processed foods, this is the area you need to focus on. Never buy a food that lists the words "partially hydrogenated," "high fructose corn syrup" or "corn syrup" in the ingredients. Also avoid foods made with artificial colors and caramel colors, preservatives (examples include BHT, TBHQ), wheat flour or enriched wheat flour, artificial sweeteners (aspartame, acesulfame potassium, sucralose, sorbitol, maltitol, etc.) or additives such as carrageenan. Most of these additives, preservatives and sweeteners are added to highly processed foods with long ingredient lists, so if you stick with the short ingredient list guideline, then you may never have to see these unhealthful ingredients again anyway.

Tip #3 Let serving size determine your portion

Perhaps the most useful piece of information on the Nutrition Facts panel is the serving size information. I always look at what constitutes a serving and how many servings are in a package to help determine

how much I need. Most packages are not single serving packages, so if you plan to eat the whole package (and I hope you don't) then you will need to multiply all of the nutrition information by the number of servings in the package to get a more accurate idea of how many calories, grams of fat and milligrams of sodium you are eating.

Tip #4 Sodium still counts

Very few people pay attention to how much sodium is in their food these days. If you are buying a processed food, then sodium is always an issue. A high sodium intake is not only a concern for people with high blood pressure – it affects everyone's health. Sodium intake is known to raise blood pressure, but most people don't know that eating a lot of salt is directly related to cardiovascular disease, even in healthy, nonhypertensive people. By cutting down on salt, you can also cut down on your risk for heart attack and stroke. Most of the salt in our diets comes from processed foods, so by following my guidelines to purchase mostly minimally-processed foods, you will also be able to cut down on the amount of sodium in your diet. When reading a food's sodium content, first look at the serving size and determine if you will actually eat that amount. Then consider if you will eat the food as part of a meal or a snack. The upper limit for sodium for the day should be 2,300 milligrams for healthy people, but under 2,000 is better. If you are aiming for an upper limit of 2,300 milligrams, then allow yourself up to 700 milligrams per meal and 100 milligrams for each of two snacks. When you know what your limits are for meals, then you can easily rule out a food that comes in above your limit. Don't forget to think about the sodium content of other ingredients in your meal. For instance, if you're planning to eat a turkey sandwich, then don't just look at the sodium in the turkey; there is also sodium in bread and cheese.

Tip #5 Tie breakers

Using the above strategies, you should be able to narrow a category down to two or three products. The thing to do next is compare the ingredients and labels side by side. If the ingredients are all similar and acceptable, use fiber, calories, or saturated fat as your guide (be sure you are comparing similar serving sizes). If both foods look good, then buy them both and see which one tastes better. After all, taste still counts.

A word about cholesterol and sugar: if you have high cholesterol, then you need to be paying particular attention to the words "partially hydrogenated" in the ingredient list and looking at the amount of saturated fat on the nutrition facts panel; the amount of cholesterol in a food is not as relevant to your condition as these other substances are. If you have diabetes or high blood sugar, you should not focus on the amount of sugar in a food – the grams of sugar on the Nutrition Facts panel include the naturally occurring sugars as well as the added sugars, and there is a big difference between the two. The key is following the guidelines set forth above to make sure that you eat high-quality, minimally processed foods that are low in sodium, saturated fat and free of trans fat. The less processed the foods you eat, the more work your body has to do to break them down into sugar, which is an important element in blood-sugar control.

Are you feeling like a Super Shopper yet? If not, I know you can become one because now you have the knowledge to help you use your shopping skills for good instead of evil. Once you make the initial time investment of choosing foods according to these guidelines, shopping should never be confusing again. If you ever need my help, use my Master Shopping list as a guide or call me at 1-800-GELSONS.

Food of the Month

Raisins

Raisins, like other dried fruits, are often overlooked as a produce pick because they are higher in calories than fresh fruits. While it's true that the drying process removes the water and concentrates the calories, the nutrients and fiber also become concentrated.

As you probably know, raisins are dried grapes and, like grapes, grape juice and wine, raisins are high in antioxidants. When compared gram-for-gram to other fruits, USDA researchers found that raisins have the second highest antioxidant ranking out of 20 common fruits or vegetables – even more than blueberries, blackberries and raspberries! Prunes, another dried fruit that is a produce outcast, are the only other fruits ranked higher than raisins in antioxidant capacity. Raisins contain phytonutrients, such as oleanolic acid, that inhibit the growth of certain harmful bacteria in the mouth, thereby helping to protect teeth and gums from decay and inflammation, and also contain other antioxidants that help protect the heart and possibly the colon. Vitamin B6, iron, potassium, magnesium, boron and thiamin can also be found in raisins.

A serving of raisins is ¼ cup, which contains 120 calories, 2 grams of fiber and 10% of your Daily Value for potassium. If portion control is difficult for you, you can often find raisins in little individual boxes that can aid in serving size restraint.

You have several choices when selecting raisins at Gelson's. Most raisins are made from green Thompson grapes, but some are made from red grapes that have more antioxidants, including resveratrol (which is found in red wine). *Sunsweet* jumbo red raisins, *Sun-Maid* Zante currants and *Pavich Organic* flame jumbo raisins in the red canister are made from red grapes. We also carry organic varieties and golden varieties, which are made from green grapes that have sulfur dioxide added to preserve their color. Whichever variety you settle on, make sure they are plump and moist. Squeeze or shake the package to see if the raisins are soft. It is best to store opened packages of raisins in the refrigerator to help extend their shelf life for up to a year and prevent further drying and sugar crystallization. You can transfer raisins to a glass jar or zipper bag if the container they come in is not airtight. Freezing also works well if you plan to keep raisins for more than a year.

If raisins dry out, you can easily plump them back up by either soaking them in a little bit of hot water or steaming them for five minutes. If a recipe calls for chopped raisins, grease the blade of your knife with a little canola oil to prevent them from sticking. Raisins make a great snack on their own or mixed with other dried fruit or even nuts. Add interest to savory dishes such as rice, stuffing, vegetables and sauces for meat, poultry and fish using plumped up raisins. Besides water, fruit juices, wine or liqueur can be used to create more complex flavors in soaked raisins. Try pairing these with plain yogurt, rice pudding or cottage cheese. This month, try my recipe for Muesli Snack Bars.



Jessica's September Store Appearances: Body Fat Testing

Jessica will be offering complimentary body fat testing and answering your questions about weight loss, food and nutrition.

West Hollywood

Monday September 17, Noon

Pacific Palisades

Monday September 17, 4:00 pm

Irvine

Monday September 24, Noon

Newport Beach

Monday September 24, 3:30 pm

Marina del Rey

Tuesday September 25, 5:00 pm

Century City

Wednesday September 26, Noon

Tarzana

Friday September 28, Noon

Sherman Oaks

Friday September 28, 4:00 pm

*Testing method is Bioelectrical Impedance and is not appropriate for people with pacemakers or osteoporosis, pregnant women or children. Be well-hydrated for most accurate results.

Gelson's has 18 locations in Southern California

CALABASAS 818-906-6228	ENCINO 818-906-5780	NEWPORT BEACH 949-644-8660	PASADENA 626-535-0190	SILVER LAKE/LOS FELIZ 323-660-0387	WEST HOLLYWOOD 323-656-5580
CENTURY CITY 310-277-4288	IRVINE 949-551-6093	NORTHRIDGE 818-377-4133	SANTA BARBARA 805-687-5810	TARZANA 818-906-5752	WESTLAKE VILLAGE 805-496-0353
DANA POINT 949-488-8147	MARINA DEL REY 310-306-2952	PACIFIC PALISADES 310-459-4483	SHERMAN OAKS 818-377-4140	VALLEY VILLAGE / NORTH HOLLYWOOD 818-906-5743	MAYFAIR HOLLYWOOD 323-464-7316