Vitamin D'oes it all!

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Vitamin D is instrumental for health, nearly every cell in the body has a vitamin D receptor, which, when bound to vitamin D, influences more than 200 gene expressions. Vitamin D promotes calcium absorption, helps prevents osteoporosis, rickets, and bone fracture. It also regulates immune function, cell growth and that's just the tip of the iceberg.

You'd think we'd all prioritize our vitamin D consumption however it has been shown to be one of the most deficient nutrients in many parts of the world, specifically in the Northern hemisphere during cold months when sunlight is reduced. Deficiency can cause fatigue, muscle weakness and cramps, infections and immune disorders, mood interruptions like depression, and is associated with high blood pressure, heart disease, and falls in older people.

Now for the good news. Getting enough vitamin D is easy and inexpensive. The sun is usually the primary source of vitamin D. Our skin absorbs UVB rays from the sun, which are converted in our bodies to Vitamin D. In the winter months the sun is hard to come by.

When that glorious sun is unavailable, there are cheap and delicious ways to keep your levels optimal. Cold water fish, like salmon and sardines, are high in vitamin D. Cod liver oil is probably the highest. Eggs and some dairy have good levels and for those who don't consume animal products mushrooms are great. Vitamin D supplements are relatively cheap and can be found in most grocery stores and pharmacies.

If you notice a health change during the winter months, have a case of winter blues or feel tired and unmotivated, low vitamin D may be the culprit. Ask your doctor to have your levels checked or increase your nutritional uptake with the foods mentioned above. Also, contact a professional like we have here at the Penticton Community Centre. Our in house nutritionist works with each individual to formulate a specific diet plan that reflects each client's goals, nutritional deficiencies, energy intake and even food preference. Lastly, take advantage of that sun and try our outdoor fitness class options like Zumba in the Park, Yoga at the Rose Garden or take a walk along our beautiful trails.

For more information contact Penticton Community Centre @ 250-490-2426 or email @ *joshua.bibbs@penticton.ca*

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For activity and program options, please visit www.penticton.ca/recreation.

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