



April 2007

Victory through Volunteering

National Volunteer Week (April 15-21) is when volunteers all over the country are recognized for their contributions. Without these generous people, many charity organizations would be unable to help the millions of people who benefit from their services.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor, about 61.2 million people volunteered at least once between September 2005 and September 2006. This represents about 26.7 percent of the population. Unfortunately, this is about 2.1 percentage points lower than the volunteer rate in each of the past 3 years and is even slightly lower than the rate of volunteerism in 2002.

This country needs its volunteers – while there are likely plenty of people who want to help, they may not know exactly how to go about it.

If you want to find out more about opportunities to volunteer, contact the Points of Light Foundation. The Points of Light Foundation & Volunteer Center National Network supports the vital work of millions of volunteers, who are helping to solve serious social problems in thousands of communities nationwide.

To be connected to a local Volunteer Center and learn more about the volunteer opportunities in your community, call 1-800-Volunteer or visit www.1-800-Volunteer.org.

Vitamin Supplement Advice

When do you need a vitamin supplement? According to the Harvard School of Public Health, a daily multivitamin may be a good idea for most adults. But taking a supplement that only focuses on just one or two nutrients may result in too much of those nutrients. And this might interfere with the absorption of other nutrients.

Taking a multivitamin does not mean you should abandon good nutrition in your daily diet. Always strive to eat a varied diet with lots of fruits and fresh vegetables. That way, you're most likely to get all the vitamins and minerals that you need.

What are vitamins and minerals?

Vitamins are complex organic micro-nutrients, which is a fancy way of saying that they work at the microscopic level to help your body carry on complex chemical processes. They have no calories themselves, and with only a few exceptions, you can't manufacture vitamins inside the body. You should be aware that cooking can destroy the potency of some vitamins.

Minerals are naturally occurring inorganic elements that your body must have in order to function. Minerals allow the body to build some structures and help trigger some bodily reactions. Iron, for example, is a key to the production of hemoglobin in the red blood cells. Calcium is used to build bone and tissues. Zinc is essential for nerve

transmission. Unlike some vitamins, cooking does not destroy the essential nutrients in minerals.

Vitamin details

Here's a look at some of the most important vitamins:

- **Vitamin A.** This vitamin helps you see in the dark; helps with the production of white blood cells; is important in bone health; and regulates cell growth. The current recommended daily intake (RDI) of vitamin A is 5,000 international units (IU) for men and 4,000 IU for women. Fortified breakfast cereals, juices and dairy products, as well as many fruits and vegetables contain vitamin A.
- **B Vitamins.** Folic acid and other B vitamins may help to prevent heart disease and stroke. The RDI of folic acid is 400 micrograms (mcg); folic acid is found in dark green leafy vegetables, fortified breakfast cereals and grains and beans. Vitamin B6: 1.3 to 1.7 mg daily. Vitamin B12: 6 mcg daily.
- **Vitamin C.** Vitamin C helps control infections, as well as plays a role in bone, teeth, gums, and blood vessel health. The current RDI is 90 mg for men and 75 for women. Vitamin C is found in citrus fruits and juices, berries, bell peppers, tomatoes, broccoli, potatoes, and spinach.
- **Vitamin D.** This vitamin is important for bone health. The RDI for this vitamin is 5 mcg up to age 50, 10 mcg from age 51 to age 70, and 15 mcg after age 70.

The Inside Scoop on Outdoor Fitness

A lot of us have grown used to spending most of our time sitting around indoors. We've grown bigger, too: Two out of three Americans weigh too much.

If we could just get more exercise we could reap multiple health benefits including weight loss, improved quality of life, and greater well-being. With warm weather on the way, now's the time to embrace the great outdoors. If you want to go out and play, below are some ideas.

Water world

Just about any water-based activity burns calories. However, if you're looking for a vigorous workout that isn't all wet, grab a paddle. Rowing a canoe, kayak, or boat works all the major muscle groups.

Beginners should try out canoeing or kayaking with veteran paddlers. Paddling clubs often have classes that introduce the basic skills, safety rules, and equipment. Guided trips are available in many areas, and you can often rent canoes and kayaks.

Which watercraft is right for you? That depends on your goals. Both canoes and kayaks work well for a casual or fitness-oriented person on relatively still water, such as a lake. Both can be suitable for rivers, depending on the conditions. There are even specialized canoes and kayaks that match various types of water and skill levels.

Solo travelers will find a kayak easier than a canoe to steer in a straight line. A couple or a parent and child can share a tandem kayak, which has two cockpits (the opening where the paddlers sit). Canoes, open from bow to stern, work better with two people.

Whatever watercraft you use, you and everyone who joins you will need to wear a Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device that fits properly.

To get started, visit the Web site of the American Canoe Association at <http://www.acanet.org>. This organization serves canoers, kayakers and rafters. On the Web site you'll find paddling clubs and water trails, along with resources for beginners.

Seek the summit

The idea of hiking may call up images of long, steep trails covered with pine needles. Yet hikes can be urban or woody, long or short, hard or easy.

If you're a beginner you can start with short, level routes close to home. All it takes is a bottle of water to stay hydrated and well-fitting walking shoes. You can plan hikes around your interests, too. Perhaps you'd like to try bird-watching or scope out historic sites.

When hiking, remember to carry a backpack with water, snacks, map, compass, first aid kit, pocket-knife, flashlight, matches, toilet paper, sunglasses, sunscreen, and clothing for all possible weather conditions.

You'll find information on hiking and other outdoor activities at <http://www.treadlightly.org>.

Rolling along

Like hiking, roller (in-line or quad) skating can suit a lot of fitness levels and personal styles. Fast, vigorous skating or racing can give you a heart-pounding aerobic workout. A simple spin around the park can provide children and adults alike with a good way to get moving outdoors.

If you want to try roller skating, consider renting the skates (and all the safety gear) to get started. Choose skates that fit your feet snugly and wear a helmet, wrist guards, and elbow and kneepads.

Start on a smooth, flat surface without hazards like rocks, oil or traffic. It may be safer at first to try an indoor skating rink.

To learn, practice moving forward, stopping, and turning. Instructors can teach the basics.

Pedal pushers

Bicycling is a great way to get around, work out, and see the sights. Also, cycling can appeal to all ages and abilities.

Start out by deciding on the bike and type of riding you plan to do, such as mountain biking or touring. The staff at a good bike shop will help you choose the best bike and gauge the fit. For instance, you should be able to touch the ground with both feet while straddling the tube that runs from the handlebars to the seat.

Remember to wear a well-fitting bike helmet, follow traffic laws, and use reflective clothing. For off-road or trail riding, you'll need other safety gear, such as a full-face helmet and shin pads.

Among the Missing: Vitamin D

Vitamin D is essential to help your body absorb and utilize calcium, which helps build strong bones and teeth.

Vitamin D prevents rickets in children and osteomalacia in adults – two forms of skeletal diseases that weaken bones.

These are sources of vitamin D:

- Foods fortified with vitamin D, including cereals and milk. (Dairy products made from milk, such as cheese and ice creams, usually are not fortified with vitamin D.)
- The ultraviolet rays of the sun. Sun exposure is the way most people get all the vitamin D they need each day.

According to the Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS), you may develop a deficiency of vitamin D:

- If your diet doesn't include enough sources of vitamin D
- If you don't get out in the sun
- If your kidneys can't convert vitamin D to the form your body needs
- If your body can't adequately absorb vitamin D

Good day, sunshine

Sunlight stimulates a hormone in your body to make vitamin D. But you don't need to spend hours sunbathing, all you need is about 10 to 15 minutes outdoors between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. two to three days a week.

However, in many parts of the country, the sun doesn't shine intensely enough in the winter months to help our bodies make vitamin D. Also, cloud cover, air pollution, altitude, and a person's skin color affect the amount of sunshine available to the body. Sunscreens can block the amount of sunshine reaching the skin, as well.

Aging and vitamin D

Older adults also have problems making enough vitamin D because older skin is less efficient at using the sunshine. In fact, elderly Americans are at the highest risk for vitamin D deficiency because of this. In addition, the elderly often don't eat enough foods that contain vitamin D and they may take medications that interfere with the body's manufacture of the vitamin.

The current ODS guidelines for daily vitamin D intake are 200 international units (IU) for people 19 to 50, 400 IU for those 51 to 70 and 600 IU for those 71 and older.

Other than the sun, the best way to get vitamin D is by drinking milk or eating cereals that have been fortified with the vitamin. One cup of fortified milk contains 100 IU. Also, one serving of a fortified cereal can provide the full daily requirement for vitamin D.

Eggs, fatty fish and liver contain some vitamin D, but you'll want to be careful of the amount of cholesterol or fat in these foods.

Don't take a vitamin D supplement until you have discussed it with your health care provider. Too much vitamin D can be toxic.

"Volunteering creates a national character in which the community and the nation take on a spirit of compassion, comradeship and confidence."

- Brian O'Connell