

K-State Research and Extension Family Nutrition Program

# DINING ON A DIME

## *Eating Better for Less*

March

### The Sunshine Vitamin Casting Wider Shadow

New research is revealing that vitamin D, often referred to as the “sunshine vitamin”, has broader effects for human health than originally suspected.



For a long time, scientists have known that vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium and helps prevent bone disease. New studies are showing that vitamin D also helps preserve muscle strength and helps protect against deadly diseases including multiple sclerosis (MS), diabetes and even cancer.

Vitamin D is nicknamed the “sunshine vitamin” because once sunlight hits your skin, it starts a chain of events that produces the vitamin. The human body can produce 10,000 to 12,000 International Units (IUs) of vitamin D from a half-hour of summer sun exposure. In practice, however, many people in the U.S. do not get enough vitamin D from sun exposure, especially during winter. When people limit their sun exposure — or use sunscreen to help prevent skin cancer — they also reduce their vitamin D production. The amount of dietary vitamin D that is recommended for most adults is 200 to 400 IUs.

#### *How do I make sure I'm getting enough vitamin D?*

Some foods, such as fish, contain vitamin D naturally. Other foods, such as milk and breakfast cereals, are fortified with the vitamin. The 2005 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* encourage all people exposed to insufficient sunlight, older adults, and those with dark skin to consume vitamin D-fortified foods or a daily multivitamin with 400 IU of vitamin D, or both.

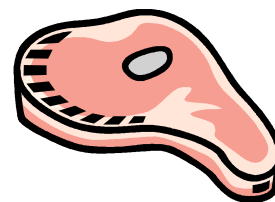
Food	Vitamin D IUs	Food	Vitamin D IUs
Sardines, canned in oil, 3 oz	430	Vitamin D-fortified milk, 8 oz (1 cup)	100
Salmon, cooked, 3 oz	310	Vitamin D-fortified cereal, about 3/4 cup	40
Tuna, canned in oil, 3 oz	200	Egg yolk, 1	20

## To Wash or Not to Wash?

We usually equate washing with cleanliness. We wash our hands before cooking or eating. We wash our dishes, clothes and even our cars. Some people believe that meat and poultry can be made cleaner and safer by washing it. But does this work? And does washing eggs, fruits and vegetables make them safer to eat? Read on to find out.

### Should I Wash Meat & Poultry?

No. Washing or rinsing raw poultry, beef, pork, lamb or veal before cooking is not recommended because it increases the risk for cross-contamination. Washing these foods can allow bacteria that are present on the surface of the meat or poultry to spread to ready-to-eat foods, kitchen utensils and counter surfaces. Any bacteria present on the uncooked surface is destroyed by cooking it to a temperature of 160 degrees. Some consumers rinse or soak ham, bacon or pork to reduce the salt content. In reality, very little salt is removed from meats by this practice.



### Should I Wash Eggs?

No. Washing is a routine part of commercial egg processing so eggs do not need to be washed again at home. After eggs are washed during the manufacturing process, a thin coating of edible mineral oil is layered on to protect the egg from bacteria. Extra handling and washing of the eggs could increase the risk of cross-contamination, especially if the shell becomes cracked.

### Should I Wash Fresh Fruits and Vegetables?

Yes. Remove and discard outer leaves, if present. Just before eating or preparing fresh fruits and vegetables, rinse under cool running tap water to remove any lingering dirt. This reduces bacteria that may be present. Do not wash fruits or vegetables with detergent or soap because residues from soap or detergent could be absorbed into the food. If there is a firm surface, such as on potatoes or melons, you may wish to scrub it with a clean brush. If storing, dry the fruit or vegetable using clean disposable or cloth towels. When preparing fruits and vegetables, cut away any damaged or bruised areas because bacteria that may cause illness can thrive in those places. Immediately refrigerate all cut fruits and vegetables, such as salad or fruit, for best quality and food safety.



Sources (Accessed 3/1/05): 1. USDA. (no date) Does Washing Food Promote Food Safety? [www.fsis.usda.gov/factsheets/Does\\_Washing\\_Food\\_Promote\\_Food\\_Safety/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/factsheets/Does_Washing_Food_Promote_Food_Safety/index.asp) 2. HHS and USDA. 2005. Dietary Guidelines for Americans. [www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/document/pdf/Chapter10.pdf](http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/document/pdf/Chapter10.pdf)

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## Do-It-Yourself Frozen Dinners

Frozen dinners can be a convenient alternative to a homemade meal on busy days when there isn't time to cook from scratch. But processed frozen dinners from the grocery store can be expensive and are usually high in fat and sodium.

Is there a better alternative? Yes! Prepare homemade frozen dinners.

Isn't this difficult? No way! All you need is a freezer.

When you are preparing a main dish, it takes only a little more effort and time to make enough for several meals.

You can either freeze all of the prepared food in meal size packages, or you can serve part of the food immediately and freeze the rest for later use. Read on to learn more helpful tips to make homemade frozen meals work at your home.



### Hints for Freezing Made-Ahead Meals

- Select only fresh, high quality ingredients. Freezing, thawing and reheating will somewhat decrease product quality.
- Some food ingredients do not freeze well. These include: mayonnaise, cream puddings and fillings, custard, gelatin, cheese, the whites of hard cooked eggs, uncooked egg yolks, unbaked biscuits, and fruits and vegetables with a high water content, such as lettuce, watermelon, citrus fruit and cucumbers.
- Slightly undercook foods you are going to freeze. They will finish cooking when reheated later.
- Cool foods quickly and freeze them promptly. Place shallow containers of food in a larger pan filled with ice or ice water. Stir often to help cool the food faster.
- Use containers with wide top openings. Food can then be removed without thawing.
- Pack food compactly into the freezer container to reduce the amount of air in the package. Allow room in the package for the food to expand as it freezes.
- Label all packages with the food's name, date and baking instructions, if any.
- Avoid overloading your freezer. Foods should be firmly frozen within 24 hours. Most freezers can freeze two to three pounds of food per cubic foot of capacity.
- Keep a list of foods you freeze and plan to eat them within one or two months.

Source (Accessed 3/1/05): Riddle, KP, and AM Brenner. 1996. Home Freezing of Cooked and Prepared Foods. [www.ianr.unl.edu/pubs/foods/g944.htm](http://www.ianr.unl.edu/pubs/foods/g944.htm)

This material was funded by USDA's Food Stamp Program through a program awarded by the KS Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS). The Food Stamp Program can help people of all ages with low income buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, contact your local SRS Service Center or call 1-800-221-5689.



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## Dining on a Dime's Cooks' Corner

### Make-Ahead Broccoli Rice Cheese Casserole

**Ingredients:** (Makes 8 servings, each 1/2 cup)

1/3 cup chopped onion	1/3 cup nonfat dry milk powder
1 teaspoon oil or margarine	1 1/2 tablespoons flour
1 pound chopped frozen broccoli, thawed	2 teaspoons oil or margarine
2 cups cooked rice	1 cup cool water
	1 cup shredded American cheese

#### Directions:

1. *For the rice mixture:* In a large saucepan, cook onion in oil until tender. Remove from heat. Stir in broccoli and cooked rice. Place mixture into one or more greased oven-proof dishes.
2. *For the cheese sauce:* In a saucepan, mix milk powder, flour and oil until it looks like coarse cornmeal. Stir in water. Cook over medium heat until smooth and thick, stirring constantly. Add cheese, remove from heat, and stir until blended. Pour sauce evenly over the rice mixture, but do not stir.
3. *Go to step 4 now or freeze it:* Cover dish or dishes tightly with foil or freezer wrap. Label with name of item, date and baking instructions. Freeze. Before use, thaw casserole in refrigerator.
4. Bake covered at 350 degrees for 45-50 minutes or until hot. Cover and refrigerate any leftovers within two hours.

Nutrition facts per 1/2 cup serving: 140 calories, 6 g fat, 15 g carbohydrate, 7 g protein, 15 mg cholesterol, 240 mg sodium. Adapted from <http://crhweb.uwyo.edu/WinTheRockies/Family%20Mealtimes/Recipes/Broccoli%20Rice%20Casserole.pdf>



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