



Now summer is nearly over we need to continue the sun's good work by keeping up our vitamin D levels. Vitamin D helps to keep our serotonin levels topped up and

this helps us to feel calm and also stops us over-eating. So, having enough vitamin D is essential for losing or maintaining your optimal weight.

Vitamin D, sometimes known as the sunshine vitamin, is synthesized by our bodies under the skin in reaction to summer sunlight. The best source of vitamin D is sunlight but there are a small number of foods that contain vitamin D naturally. Good sources include oily fish such as salmon, tuna, mackerel and sardines. I've put together some tasty recipes for you to enjoy, improve your health and bring sunshine to your plate!

Summer Recipes

Super Powered Mackerel Couscous (serves 3-4)

Ingredients:

200g Couscous (preferably wholewheat)
2 1/2 tbsp Olive Oil
1 tsp Ground Cumin
1 Lemon
1/2 head Broccoli, cut into florets
5 Fillets Smoked Mackerel

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How will these foods help you?

Salmon, Mackerel and Tuna as well as being rich dietary sources of vitamin D, are excellent sources of protein and rich in beneficial fish oils, known as omega 3 fatty acids. Protein contains amino acids and is necessary in the diet for muscle growth and maintenance. The beneficial fish oils help to regulate and reduce inflammation in the body. In addition, these fish are rich in vitamins and minerals which are essential for optimum health. Salmon is a good source of phosphorous, selenium and vitamin B12. Phosphorous is important for healthy bones and teeth, as well as good kidney function. Vitamin B12 is essential for nerve function, DNA synthesis and energy

80g Hazelnuts, toasted and roughly chopped
75g Dried Apricots, roughly chopped
2tbsp toasted seeds (sunflower, pumpkin, sesame)
2 tbsp finely chopped dill

Method

1. Put the couscous in a large bowl and stir in the oil, cumin and the zest and juice of half a lemon.
2. Stir in 300ml of boiling water, cover and leave for 10 minutes.
3. Blanch the broccoli for 3 minutes in boiling water and then run under the cold tap until cool.
4. Remove the skin from the mackerel fillets and flake it through the couscous.
5. Mix in the hazelnuts, apricots, seeds, dill and rocket.
6. Stir through the remaining lemon juice and season with black pepper, to your taste.

This meal is great for dinner parties!

Salmon with a sundried tomato and goats cheese crust (serves 2)

Ingredients:

2 Salmon Fillets
125g Soft Goats Cheese
2 tbsp Sundried Tomato Paste
3 tbsp Breadcrumbs
1 tbsp Grated Parmesan

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C/400°F/Gas Mark 6.
2. Place the salmon fillets skin side down on a baking sheet.
3. Spread 1 tbsp of sundried tomato paste over each fillet.
4. Mix together the breadcrumbs, goats cheese and grated parmesan and cover each fillet with the breadcrumb mix.
5. Bake in the oven for around 20 minutes.

Grilled Tuna Steaks with Mango and Green Pepper Salsa (Serves 2)

Ingredients:

2 Tuna Steaks
Half a Fresh Mango, diced
1 Green Pepper, diced
Handful Fresh Coriander, finely chopped
Juice of 1 Lime

Method

1. Grill the Tuna under a medium heat to your taste. 2 minutes on each side will cook it rare.
2. Mix the diced mango, diced green pepper, chopped coriander and lime juice together in a bowl.
3. Serve together!

metabolism. Whilst selenium is a potent antioxidant. Mackerel, also rich in selenium, is a good source of magnesium. Magnesium is key for muscle relaxation as well as maintenance of good cardiovascular health. Tuna is also a rich source of vitamin B12, as well as containing niacin (vitamin B3). Niacin has a key role in energy metabolism.

Mango is an excellent source of vitamin C which has a wide range of health benefits attributed to it. These include strengthening the immune system, the maintenance of healthy bones, joints and skin, helping the body to protect against cancer and heart disease and energy production in the body. Mangos are also a useful digestive aid as they contain enzymes that are beneficial in the correct digestion of protein.

Rocket is a peppery tasting vegetable. Bitter foods, such as rocket, are beneficial for the digestion. It stimulates digestion by enhancing the production of digestive fluids in the stomach and the production of bile. An increase in bile production will help digestion and absorption of fats.

Broccoli is rich in phytonutrients and its role in cancer prevention has been extensively studied. It is thought that these phytochemicals protect the body from cancer by regulating the way in which cells respond to environmental changes that can potentially trigger cancerous changes within the DNA of the cell. They do this by

Nutritional Research - What does vitamin D do?

Vitamin D is best known for its essential role in aiding calcium absorption and therefore maintenance of healthy bones. Calcium is vital in the formation of the bone matrix and thus the development of strong bones in children, and the maintenance of bone strength in adults.

Over the last 10 years vitamin D has been the subject of extensive research and multiple roles for the sunshine vitamin are being uncovered in overall body health. Postulated roles include strengthening the immune system, reducing the risk of type 2 diabetes and the maintenance of a healthy cardiovascular system.

There is increasing evidence that vitamin D has a pivotal role in the immune system, both activating our white blood cells that fight infection, and reducing inflammation levels within the body.

Vitamin D has also been shown to regulate insulin secretion within the body and support the uptake of glucose into body cells, thus reducing circulating blood sugar levels.

Finally, evidence suggests that vitamin D has a role in preventing high blood pressure, through its actions on the kidney.

REFERENCES

Zitterman A (2003) Vitamin D in preventative medicine: are we ignoring the evidence? *British Journal of Nutrition*, **89**: 552-572.

Cannell JJ & Hollis B (2008) Use of vitamin D in clinical practice. *Alternative Medicine Review*, **13**: 6-20.

enhancing the cell's natural defence mechanisms to damage, making it more able to resist changes.

Goats Cheese is a very good source of calcium. Calcium is best known for its role in maintaining strength and density of bones.



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