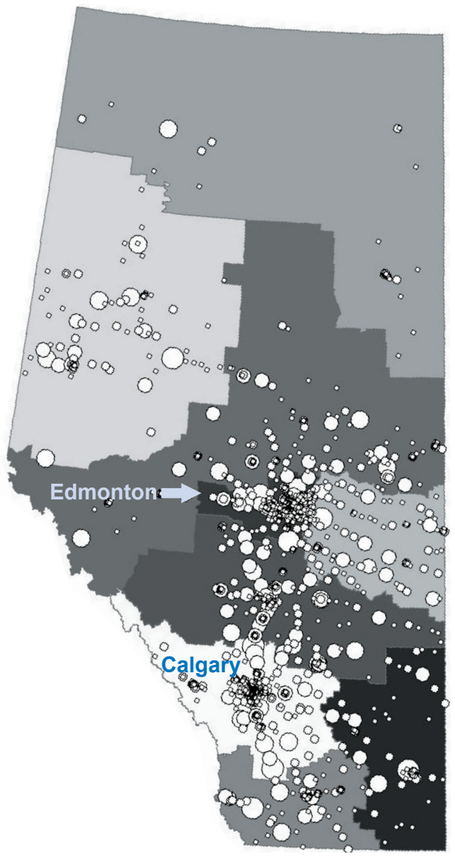
Study Update

Good news! Recruitment to *The Tomorrow Project* resumed in June 2006. The goal of this new recruitment phase is to boost enrollment to 30,000 from the current level of 18,500. Phones will be busy ringing across Alberta for the next 18 months in order to reach this impressive goal. If you are one of the new participants in the Project – welcome.

The Project involves people from all parts of the province as shown in the map below.

Tomorrow Project Participants in Alberta



Please Help Us To Keep Our Files Up To Date

On the front cover of this issue, you will see the address and phone numbers we currently have on file for you. Because *The Tomorrow Project* is a long-term study, staying in touch with participants is an important part of our work because it reduces the number of participants who are "lost-to-follow-up". Please take a moment to review the information and to contact us with any corrections or additional information. Remember, we can send you information wherever you might now be living, even outside Alberta or Canada.

The Role of The Alberta Cancer Foundation

Many thanks to the Alberta Cancer Foundation for the ongoing funding of *The Tomorrow Project.* As the charitable arm of the Alberta Cancer Board, the Foundation provides considerable support to many programs of cancer research across the province. In addition, the Foundation raises funds and accepts donations to enhance patient care, to support cancer prevention programs and to provide a financial assistance program for patients in need. For more information about the work of the Alberta Cancer Foundation, visit: www.cancerboard.ab.ca/foundation.

Need To Contact Us?

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Alberta Cancer Board | Alberta Cancer Foundation

Tomorrow's News

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The Tomorrow Project® — Albertans Studying the Connection Between Lifestyle and Cancer

Who's Who in *The Tomorrow Project*

Near Innisfail in central Alberta, Regula Gerber spends her days watching over 85 head of cattle on a dairy farm that she and her family moved to nine years ago, after leaving Switzerland.

Twenty years ago, Regula traveled to Canada to study agriculture, spending time at Olds College in Alberta. Her husband, Henry, whom she met in Switzerland after returning from her Alberta studies, soon followed in Regula's footsteps, traveling to Alberta to study agriculture at Olds College as well. Regula and Henry carried on a 'trans-Atlantic' relationship until his training was complete and he could return to Switzerland. They were both interested in agriculture and having a farm of their own, so when Henry returned to Switzerland, they decided to take over his father's dairy farm.

In 1997, as a result of increasing dairy farming restrictions in Switzerland, Regula and Henry came back to Alberta. They purchased land near Innisfail and began their own dairy farm. According to Regula, the biggest job on the farm is milking the cows. "Each cow is milked two or three times a day which adds up to a lot of milk – almost 1,700 liters a day," says Regula. Milk is picked up each day and taken to a processing plant for pasteurization, arriving at the grocery store in less than 72 hours from the time the cows were milked.

Regula joined *The Tomorrow Project* after receiving a phone call inviting her to join. "Everyone will know someone with cancer," says Regula, who has been a participant in the study since it began in 2000. "I became a participant because I wanted to help with cancer research."

Study participant Regula Gerber, is a dairy farmer from Innisfail, Alberta. She is one of 18,500 *Tomorrow Project* participants

Regula is active in her community and is a member of the Innisfail & District Agricultural Society. When not working on the farm or volunteering, she enjoys gardening. "Gardening is nice in Alberta, but I wish more varieties of plants and flowers could be grown here," adds Regula. She also enjoys catering events in and around Innisfail and doing crafts with her daughters – Michelle, Celine and Desiree**.**

PLEASE UPDATE

Please help us update the information printed below.

For corrections or additions:

- Call our 24 hour toll-free line: 1-877-919-9292
- Email us: tomorrow@cancerboard.ab.ca

Vitamin D and Health

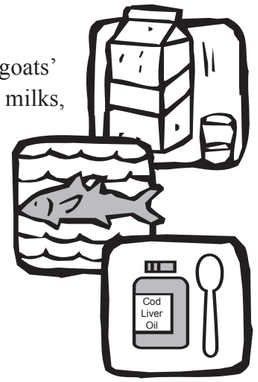
There has been a lot of media coverage recently surrounding the potential health benefits of vitamin D, including speculation about a possible link to the prevention of cancer. For many years, it was assumed that people who ate a variety of foods and who spent a little time outdoors would obtain enough vitamin D to maintain their health. However, over the last decade, many studies have shown that vitamin D deficiency is more common than we thought. Why does this matter? Severe vitamin D deficiency is known to increase fracture risk in elderly people, and some researchers are now suggesting that low levels of vitamin D in the body might increase risks of developing diseases like multiple sclerosis and certain cancers. However, the evidence for this is still far from conclusive, and many more studies need to be done to confirm whether or not this is the case.

So, where do we get vitamin D?

We can obtain vitamin D from two sources; diet and sunlight.

Food sources

Vitamin D occurs naturally in very few foods. In Canada, margarine and cows' and goats' milks for sale to the public need to have vitamin D added during processing. Some soy milks, juices and meal replacements may also be fortified. Dietary supplements can also provide vitamin D. The adequate intake levels for Canadian adults are currently set at 200 International Units per day (IU/d) for people aged 1-50 years, 400 IU/d for people aged 51-70 years, and 600 IU/d for people aged over 70 years.



Dietary sources of vitamin D	Amount of vitamin D
1 tablespoon cod liver oil	1280 IU
100g Atlantic salmon	328 IU
1 cup cows' milk	108 IU
1 teaspoon margarine	26 IU
1 large poached egg	17 IU
50g cheddar cheese	6 IU

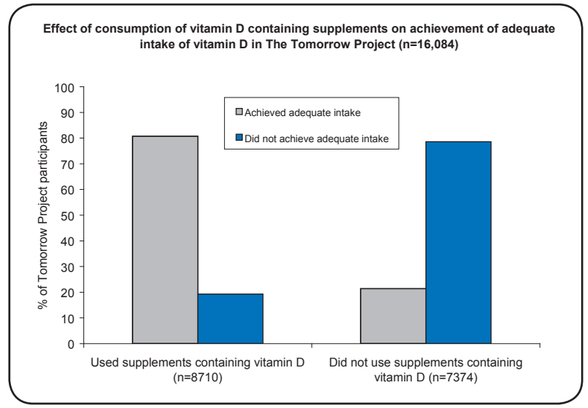
Source: Canadian Nutrient File 2005 (1)

Sunlight

For people who don't consume foods or supplements containing vitamin D, sun exposure is the main source of the vitamin. Vitamin D is made in skin that is exposed to the ultraviolet B (UVB) radiation in sunlight. During the summer months, when the sun's rays are more direct, the amount of time that skin needs to be exposed in order to make enough vitamin D is very small. In fact, it has been suggested that as little as 5 to 10 minutes of sun exposure on hands, face or arms twice a week may be sufficient for some people. However, it is thought that in Alberta we can't make vitamin D in our skin in winter because UVB intensity is not sufficient between the months of October and March.

Vitamin D insufficiency in Alberta?

Data from *The Tomorrow Project* suggest that many Albertan adults do not obtain enough vitamin D from foods. Approximately half of the people who completed the Diet History Questionnaire reported vitamin D intakes that were lower than current dietary recommendations. People who reported using dietary supplements that contained vitamin D were more likely to achieve adequate intake levels than people who did not use supplements. Another smaller study undertaken in Alberta reported that blood levels of vitamin D measured in adults were too low, especially during fall and winter (2).



How can we get more vitamin D?

Some people have suggested that exposing our skin to sunlight for very short periods of time in the summer would help boost vitamin D levels in our bodies. However this creates a dilemma because we know for certain that exposing unprotected skin to sunlight and UVB radiation increases the risk of developing skin cancer, the most common cancer in Alberta and Canada today.

A second approach is to take supplements. Some experts now believe that people living in Canada should consume extra vitamin D, particularly during the winter. However, before widespread supplementation can be recommended, much more research is required to find out how much vitamin D is beneficial for health. Also, because we know that too much supplemental vitamin D can be harmful, researchers need to be sure that there are no health risks associated with long-term supplement use.

Conclusion

So, as researchers work to answer many of the remaining questions surrounding vitamin D and health, many agencies have found it difficult to make specific recommendations for optimizing vitamin D status. However, it is important to remember to practice sun safety, and if you think you might like to use a vitamin D supplement, talk to your health care practitioner or a dietitian.

For more information follow these links...

http://www.cancerboard.ab.ca/cancer/cancer_public_sun.html

http://dietary-supplements.info.nih.gov/factsheets/VitaminD_pf.asp

http://www.cancer.ca/ccs/internet/standard/0,3182,3172_486352054__langId-en,00.html

(1) Canadian Nutrient File, 2005. http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/fiche-nutri-data/index_e.html *Accessed 6th July 2006.*
(2) Rucker D et al. Vitamin D insufficiency in a population of healthy western Canadians. CMAJ, 2002; 166:1517-1524.