**VITAMINS**

by Michael Halm

Vitamins were discovered in 1896 and originally called accessory food factors. It wasn't until 1911 when they were proven to be essential to good health that they were called vitamins (from *vita*, "life") that they gained public attention.

Vitamin A (actually any of the several fat-soluble vitamins) is necessary for epithelial cell production. It is also called the Anti-infection vitamin since it helps strengthen resistance to infection. Vitamin A is essential to the production of visual purple which is necessary for night vision, Vitamin A deficiency can therefore lead to night blindness, aggravation of infections of the lungs and sinuses, premature aging of the skin (or diaper rash in infants) or slow growth in children.

An overdose of vitamin A can be just as dangerous as a deficiency. An over dose of vitamin A can lead to fatigue, hair loss, insomnia or vitamin B deficiency. The body uses the vitamins in the natural proportions that they are found in foods.

Vitamin A is stored in the liver so that a daily intake is not necessary as with many other vitamins. It is lost to foods exposed air or sunlight. The best sources of vitamin A are dark green vegetables, such as spinach or broccoli, yellow vegetables, such as carrots or yams, egg yolks and whole milk and milk products.

The vitamin B complex is essential for the conversion of carbohydrates into glucose and the normal functioning of the nervous system and gastrointestinal tract. Since they are water soluble they may be lost if cooking water is thrown away. They are especially important during times of stress or emotional trauma.

Vitamin B1 or thiamin deficiency may lead to fatigue, nerve pain or numbness. It is the beriberi preventive vitamin, the anti-neuritic vitamin. It is present in brown, but not in white, rice wheatgerm, brewers' yeast, sunflower seeds and legume. Five hundred years ago English peasants consumed twice as much vitamin B1 in their diet as Americans do now.

Vitamin B2 (formerly vitamin G) or riboflavin is the yellowish, florescent green, pigment found in milk. It is also found in liver, almonds, mushrooms and turnip greens. Deficiency may lead to soreness of the mouth, itching eyes or over-sensitivity to light and is rapidly destroyed on exposure to light.

Vitamin B6 helps in the formation of antibodies and red blood cells. Deficiency may lead to muscular weakness, depression, even convulsions or anemia. It is found in meat, whole grains, nuts and brewers' yeast.

Vitamin B12 is used by all cells but especially in the bone mallow, gastrointestinal tract, nervous system and red blood cells. It is primarily found in the liver and is the only known vitamin to contain cobalt. Some sources of this vitamin are meats, fish, milk, eggs and soybeans.

Vitamin B15 is not sold as a commercial vitamin in the U. S., but is found in brewers' yeast and seeds.

Vitamin B17, the (in)famous laetrile cancer treatment, contains cyanide and is found in apricot kernels.

Vitamin C maintains collagen, helping to heal wounds, preventing hemorrhaging and the absorption of iron. Like the B vitamins it is required more during stress. It is the most easily destroyed of all vitamins.

Hot weather, air pollution (smoking) and aspirin increase the need for it. It is however found in most fruits and vegetables. (The most light that they've received the more C.)

Vitamin D regulates blood calcium and phosphorus and so bone development. Sunlight can change skin cholesterol in D but it is found in fish liver oil, egg yolks, organ meats, and milk products as well.

Vitamin E prevents the breakdown of vitamin A and red blood cells and aids in the healing process. It is destroyed by commercial processing. Deficiency may lead to premature infants, infrequent ovulation or other reproductive problems. It is found in wheatgerm, whole grains, organ meats, fruits, peanuts, eggs and green leafy vegetables.

Vitamin K prevents hemorrhaging and aids blood clotting. It is destroyed by mineral oil, alcohol, alkali, light, sulfa drugs and antibiotics interfere with its absorption. It is found in green leafy vegetable, alfalfa sprouts, fats, oats, wheat, rye, nuts and seeds.

Vitamin Q also is an aid to blood clotting. It is found in organ meats, green leafy vegetables and seeds. Vitamin T, originally found in termites, yeasts and molds, has now been found in sesame seeds and egg yolks. It is another aid to blood coagulation. Vitamin U is helpful in the treatment of ulcers. It has been found in cabbage and alfalfa.

There is one other essential life-giving ingredient that out to be a part of every recipe, especially the diets of infants and children, a cure for a multitude of ills of everyday living, "vitamin" L, love. There has never been a case of an overdose.