



SHARAN

Sanctuary for Health And Reconnection to Animals and Nature



SHARAN Newsletter - Issue #9 - November 2010

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Special Feature: The importance of Vitamin D

Vitamin D is known as the sunshine vitamin because our bodies create this important vitamin when the skin is exposed to the sun. **Alarmingly, many people are deficient in this vitamin.** This is because **many people spend most of their time living and working indoors and avoid the sun or use sunscreen** because of the fear of skin cancer. Smog and pollution in cities can also block the sun's rays. Indians prefer not to get darker and also avoid the sunlight. **In a random study of people from Indian metro cities we found that 50% had vitamin D deficiency.**

Vitamin D is very important for calcium absorption. It also **helps boost immunity** by fortifying the white blood cells which defend against bacteria. It also has **anti-inflammatory properties.** **A link has been made between influenza and vitamin D deficiency** in countries which experience long winters with low levels of sunlight ([Source](#)). **Depression, mental health problems and Seasonal Affective Disorder have also been linked to low vitamin D levels** in patients ([Source](#)). Other diseases which can be caused by a deficiency in Vitamin D include high blood pressure, diabetes, autoimmune diseases, excess fat accumulation around vital organs, different types of cancer, atherosclerosis (thickening of arteries), osteoporosis (deterioration of bone mass) and osteopenia (thinning of bones).

There are two types of Vitamin D. Ergocalciferol (Vitamin D2) is found in a few foods like fatty fish. In some countries, fruit juices, milk or cereals are often fortified with this vitamin. **Cholecalciferol (Vitamin D3) is what is produced by the body when the skin is exposed to sunlight. It is difficult to get enough Vitamin D through food sources. This is why sunshine is the best option. And it's free!**

For more information, read [15 facts about Vitamin D and sunlight exposure](#)

What you can do

Sit in the sun

The best way to get Vitamin D is from the sun. Spend 15 to 20 minutes a day in direct sunlight, 3 to 5 times a week. Do not wear sunscreen during this time as this will prevent your skin from absorbing the vitamin. Taking vitamin D supplements can cause hypervitaminosis D which can be dangerous. However, you can never get too much vitamin D from the sun. (But do avoid sunburn by limiting exposure to 15 to 20 minutes.)

Vitamin D is stored by the body. If you have enough stores you can get by on the cloudy days without any problems.

Take a test

If you're concerned that you may be Vitamin D deficient, and have **symptoms like depression, chronic fatigue, weight loss and muscle ache** get a test done to determine your level of Vitamin D. **In places with long winters, or cloudy or smoggy weather, its very important to get Vitamin D levels checked.**



In case of deficiency, supplementation is required but even then levels should be checked to avoid over-dosage.

Let others know

The importance of Vitamin D to general health and well-being is overlooked by many medical practitioners. Let your friends and family members know why it's important to get limited sun exposure for optimal health.



Fact or Fiction?

Supplements are required on a vegan diet.

FACT!

A supplement of vitamin B12 is highly recommended as this is lacking in a plant-based diet. For more information see [this page](#). This is the only vitamin which needs supplementation.

Vitamin D is best obtained from direct sunlight. As for other vitamins and nutrients, as long as you're eating a wide variety of plant-based whole foods, you should be getting everything you need. For more information on supplementing Vitamin D see [this page](#).

Recipe

15 Bean Soup

This hearty soup is perfect for cold winter evenings!

Ingredients:

500 grams dried mixed beans
12 cups water
1 large onion, chopped
1 cup celery, chopped
1 bell pepper, chopped
1 clove garlic, minced
Juice of one lemon
500 grams tomatoes, chopped
2 tsp paprika
1 tsp chilli powder

1/4 tsp cayenne pepper
1/4 tsp black pepper
1/2 tsp oregano
1 tsp thyme
1 1/2 teaspoons salt

Method:

Put the beans in a pot with 12 cups of water and boil for 60-75 minutes until the beans are tender (or use a pressure cooker which will be quicker). While the beans are boiling, brown the onions, celery, bell pepper and garlic in a pan. Add the tomatoes, lemon juice and spices to the beans and simmer for 30-45 minutes. Add salt at the end. Serve with bread or rice.



For more exciting recipe ideas, visit the [recipes page](#) on the SHARAN website!

News from SHARAN



Dr Nandita Shah attended the **Healthy Lifestyle Expo in Los Angeles in mid-October**. There were several inspiring speakers there who are experts in their fields for reversing diseases through a plant-based diet. [Dr Caldwell Esselstyn](#), the physician responsible for getting Bill Clinton to go on a vegan diet to reverse his heart disease, was one. Other speakers included [Dr Joel Fuhrman](#), and the amazing [Dr John McDougall](#) who spoke about his new study on multiple sclerosis. [Rip Esselstyn](#), an athlete, firefighter and advocate for a plant-based diet spoke about his plans to change the health of America. He along with dietician [Jeff Novick](#) and others are working with the Whole Foods chain to give people examples of what could be healthy nutritious food. Other inspiring speakers at this conference were [John Robbins](#) the Rev. Heng Sure and [Dr Matt Lederman](#). (Above photo: John McDougall and Nandita Shah)

Dr Nandita Shah also went to Washington DC where she conducted, through the [Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine \(PCRM\)](#), a healthy Indian cooking class at Whole Foods at Friendship

Heights. **PCRM is committed to spreading the message about plant-based nutrition** in the US through various projects like [The Cancer Project](#), the [Food for Life TV](#), the Healthy School Lunches project, and many more. **Dr Neal Barnard**, the president is incredibly dynamic, and is spreading this message widely in the US and the world. His work includes several research studies on diabetes and other diseases.

On 30th & 31st October, Shankar Narayan of the [Indian Vegan Society](#) organised a **Vegetarian Congress in Bangalore**. Although the number of attendees was small, it was a very enthusiastic crowd. **Mr Harshad Parekh and Anil Narang announced their plans to open vegan shops all over India, starting in Mumbai.** With November 1st being World Vegan Day, we believe a tiny step has been made towards popularizing this compassionate lifestyle in India.



Meanwhile, the [Mumbai Vegans](#) group was busy. Swati Save had the idea to sell **Vegan delights for Diwali**. She pursued this project, garnering the help of Mrs Saroj Choudhury, Rahul Koshaley, Dr Rupa Shah, Rithika Ramesh and Marisa Paolillo. **They sold a variety of Vegan delights from all over India at the Vishwa Show in South Mumbai.** This venture was a huge success with a large number of people visiting their stall.

A good way to learn about how plant-based and whole foods are beneficial for health and well-being is to join one of Dr Nandita Shah's popular **Peas vs. Pills workshops**. These are held on a regular basis all over India, as well as abroad.

Upcoming Peas vs Pills workshops in Auroville:

Sunday 12 December 2010

Sunday 2 January 2011

Sunday 20 February 2011

Sunday 13 March 2011

Upcoming events in Mumbai:

Sunday 23 January 2011: Vegan lunch and get-together for old friends and new

Wednesday 26 January 2011: Reversing Diabetes Workshop

Details will be up soon on the [events page](#).

For more information on SHARAN's seminars and workshops, visit the [events page](#) on our website.

If you're interested in hosting a workshop in your area or to keep informed of upcoming workshops and events, contact info@sharan-india.org



There are active vegan groups in Mumbai and Bangalore. **Vegan potlucks** are a great way to meet other vegans in your area and share experiences and recipes. For information on monthly vegan potlucks in Mumbai and Bangalore, visit this link. Visit also the [Vegan Bangalore](#) and [Mumbai Vegans blog](#).

A vegan group has also been created in [Delhi](#).

Visit the [SHARAN photo album](#) to see pictures of our past events. Those who have attended our events may enjoy seeing pictures of themselves and the group. Click on the image to get an enlarged version.

Did you miss past issues of this newsletter? Have a look at the [SHARAN newsletter archives](#).

Visit the [SHARAN website](#) regularly to read about the [latest news](#) and [upcoming events](#).



Join [SHARAN India on Facebook](#) to find out about upcoming events, join in discussions and share experiences, and meet other like-minded people!



What is SHARAN?

We are a non-profit organization with the goals of spreading holistic health awareness, and an ecologically sustainable compassionate lifestyle. We believe that all life on the planet is interconnected. By reconnecting we can heal ourselves and our earth.

Visit our website: www.sharan-india.org

Contact us: info@sharan-india.org