

life

Sunday Monitor

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EAT

HEALTHY EATING TIPS > Compiled by Beatrice Nakibuuka

Magical wand that is Vitamin A

The A vitamin is a fat-soluble vitamin that exists in many foods. It is helpful for vision, strong immune system and reproduction. Vitamin A also helps the heart, lungs, kidneys, and other organs work properly.

Inadequate intake of vitamin A may lead to deficiency which can cause visual impairment and increase the risk of illness and death from childhood infections, including measles and diarrhoea.

Dr John Mukisa, a medical officer at Mulago hospital, warns that the most common symptoms of vitamin A deficiency is the inability to see in low light, at night, colour blindness, swelling in the eyes, dry eye syndrome, abnormal tolerance of light and blindness if not treated.

According to World Health Organisation, 190m infants suffer vitamin A deficiency most of which are in Africa. WHO therefore recommends biannual vitamin A supplementation for infants between six to 59 months to reduce morbidity and mortality caused by vitamin A deficiency among children.

"The vitamin helps to shorten or reduce complications of diseases such as malaria, HIV, measles and diarrhoea in children by strengthening the immune system," Dr Mukisa says. "The vitamin is essential in regulating the immune system by helping in the formation of white blood cells which fight off infections."

Skin

Vitamin A helps form and maintains a healthy skin, teeth, skeletal and soft

Vitamin A is also used for skin conditions including acne, eczema, psoriasis, cold sores, wounds, burns and sunburn.

The nutrient is applied to the skin to improve wound healing, reduce wrinkles and protects the skin from Ultra Violet radiations from the sun.

Dr Mukisa says Vitamin A helps in skin repair and rejuvenation of the body and an increase in the levels of vitamin A result in the reduction in acne and other skin problems.

Sight

A deficiency of the vitamin can lead to sight problems. It is also known as retinol because it produces the pigments in the retina of the eye. This is combined with opsin to produce a light absorbing molecule needed for colour vision and

Dr Mukisa says, "Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is one of the most common causes of vision loss in older people. The loss of central vision as people age can be counteracted with daily intake of vitamin A."

Menstrual cramps

Vitamin A has proven to have effects on reproductive health and maintaining a balanced level of the vitamin will help to get rid of premenstrual syndrome and heavy bleeding.

Feeding recommendations

If you want to have a great feel of the Vitamin A, Dr Mukisa recommends liver and other organ meats, fish, dairy products, sweet potato and eggs. "Leafy green vegetables such as kale, spinach, and broccoli."