

Vitamin D for Winter Health

THE cod liver oil season is here, winter being not far away now. The colder, bleaker part of the year calls for an extra supply of vitamin D, certainly for all pre-school children. Babies are supposed to be having this all the year round. School children can mostly get by without, but I think it would be useful to let them have some extra vitamin D, too, in wintertime. It depends a bit on how much sunshine they had on their skins in the sunny half of the year. For that is one natural source of vitamin D. The ultra-violet rays in the sunshine, falling on bare skin, activate a substance called ergosterol in skin cells so that vitamin D is manufactured for the body. Fortunately, any excess made in summer is stored, but this store is often exhausted prematurely in winter.

The other natural source of vitamin D is our food. You would think that between sunshine and our food we should be all right, and that nature could hardly have planned to keep us short of an essential vitamin. For it is a most important one. In its absence the mechanism for taking lime and phosphorus out of our food won't work properly. The bones don't firm up without these minerals, and stay soft and bend, and get knobbly ends. We used to have a lot of this, and we called it rickets, in the days before nutritionists worked out this vitamin D business. Nowadays, with more balanced diets and sunbathing, and vitamin D supplements, growing children rarely have rickets, except in less fortunate countries with deficient diets, or in times of war when supplies are disrupted.

Nevertheless, although we are a fortunate country, with ample sunshine and plenty of food, our babies and growing children still need added vitamin D from cod liver oil or a substitute. That is, if you want first-class bones, straight and strong, and hence a sturdy upstanding child. The lime for these bones comes mainly from milk and cheese, the phosphorus mostly from fish, cheese, eggs, milk, meat and whole cereals. But these foods are not over blessed with vitamin D, without which neither lime nor phosphorus sets properly in the bones. The richest sources of vitamin D are fish liver oil, sardines and eel flesh, and eggs have just a fair amount. To get a daily sufficiency a child would need to eat any one of the available sources of vitamin D and to this extent: either one teaspoonful of cod liver oil or its equivalent in a substitute, or from tins, 1½ ounces of sardines, or 8½ ounces of herrings, or about a quarter of a pound of eel flesh, or 12 eggs, or one and a half pounds of butter, or five gallons of milk. You see from this that nature is not very prodigal of vitamin D in foodstuffs. She meant us to get it mainly from the sun, but we interfere with clothes, and spoil things a bit there.

A couple of hundred years before scientists recognised vitamin D, Manchester Infirmary was using cod or ling

THIS is the text of a talk on health broadcast recently from the ZB, YA and YZ stations of the NZBS by DR. H. B. TURBOTT, Deputy-Director-General of Health

oil for what they called chronic rheumatism, but what was in reality rickets. It worked all right, but this cure didn't progress much beyond the confines of Lancashire. Other places were apparently too squeamish. It must have been tough to take. It was made by allowing livers to putrefy until liquid, when the oil rose to the top, and was skimmed off for use. More than two centuries went by before it was discovered that cod liver oil could be extracted from fresh livers by steaming.

Fish liver oil still holds pride of place as our modern source of vitamin D. The amount required daily by growing children has been standardised at 400 international units. This is found in one teaspoon of cod liver oil. If you are using any other fish oil or an artificial substitute, check carefully from the label that the dose you give is equivalent to 400 international units, or one teaspoon of cod liver oil. A baby needs one to two teaspoonfuls daily, from one to five years, a pre-school child needs one teaspoonful, and a school child to fifteen years the same. Give vitamin D to your growing family this winter.

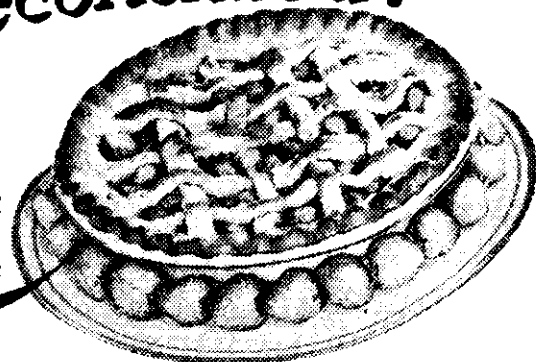


WRITER IN REVOLT

WAS George Borrow, friend of the gypsies and champion of the dispossessed, a rebel against his time, or was he—as hostile contemporaries claimed—frustrated, a cold egotist, a liar and a boaster and a rancorous hater? In a BBC programme about Borrow now going the rounds of National stations an attempt is made to reveal the man as he appeared to those who knew him and as he saw himself. Borrow was a great traveller. Apart from having a good look at England, he visited France, Germany, Russia, Spain and the East, studying the languages of the countries he visited. One of his best-known books is *The Bible in Spain*, which he wrote after six years of hardship in Spain as a travelling agent for the British and Foreign Bible Society. Michael Wharton, who wrote the BBC programme, has drawn on this work for some of his material. The second half of the feature is based on *Lavengro*, which, like its sequel *The Romany Rye*, is largely autobiographical. *George Borrow* will be heard from 2YC at 7.34 p.m. this Saturday (May 22), and from 4YZ in *Weekend Magazine* at 1.45 p.m. this Sunday (May 23).

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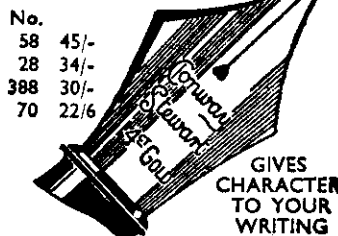
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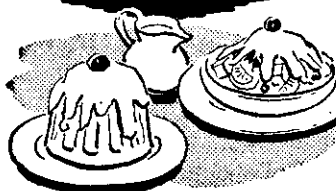
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