

# Sources of Nutrition During Lent

*Below are the nutrients most difficult to obtain from plant foods and recommendations for obtaining them from foods allowed during the fast.*

## Vitamin B12

- **Best – Clams.** B12 is available from all animal foods but clams happen to be a much richer source than all others. One serving of clams per month can satisfy the RDA. Clams can be eaten during the weekends.
- **Good – use of other shellfish** during the weekends.

## Zinc

- **Best – Oysters.** Oysters have 4-10 times as much zinc as beef and beef has four times as much as most plant foods. Moreover, zinc from plant foods is poorly absorbed. Eating oysters once a week satisfies the RDA for zinc. Oysters can be eaten during the weekends.
- **Good – use of other shellfish** during the weekends. Also, all **nuts, legumes and whole grains** can be soaked overnight in a slightly acidic medium (such as water with a little lemon juice or vinegar). This breaks down compounds called phytates that inhibit zinc absorption, and makes the small amount of zinc they contain much more absorbable.

## Vitamin B6

- **Best – Bananas.** One or two bananas per day will supply plenty of B6. Most other plant foods contain lower amounts of it and contain it in a less absorbable form. Also, cooking destroys much of the B6 and bananas are usually eaten raw.
- **Good –** Although most other plant foods are not very good sources, most of them do supply a small amount. Refined flours are fortified with certain B vitamins, but not with B6. So, avoiding foods made with refined sugar and flour and eating more whole grains, legumes and vegetables will also help.

## Vitamin A

- **Best – Red palm oil.** Vitamin A is only contained in animal foods, but plant foods contain carotenoids, which can be converted into vitamin A. The carotenoids

in red palm oil are much more easily absorbed and converted than those in vegetables. However, you will probably have to go to a health food store or mail order online to find red palm oil.

- **Good –** Generous amounts of **colorful vegetables**, especially those that are red and orange but also those that are green. As an example of how to meet the RDA with these foods, one can eat two cups of carrots, two cups of cooked kale, or one cup of sweet potatoes per day. (Note: since vitamin A can be stored long-term, it is ok to eat smaller amounts of it on some days and larger amounts of it on others, rather than trying to get the RDA every single day. Also, my estimates of the requirement from vegetables are higher than what you'd find on the label because mine are based on the currently available science rather than old government recommendations.)

## Vitamin D

- **Best – Sunshine.** Vitamin D is primarily found in fatty fish and to a lesser extent butter, egg yolks, and other fish. However, it can also be obtained from sunshine from March through September at our latitude. Thus, one can obtain plenty of vitamin D by going out in the sun. The more skin exposed the better, and one **MUST** go out *\*without\** sunscreen. However, one need not stay out long – if you start turning pink you've more than maximized your vitamin D production for the day.

## Vitamin K

- **Best – Leafy greens and fermented foods.** Vitamin K is found in two forms: vitamin K1 and K2. The former is found in green vegetables (the darker the green, the more vitamin K) and the latter is found in animal fats and fermented foods. It is good to get both if possible. Several servings of leafy greens per week is sufficient for K1 and fermented foods such as sauerkraut or other forms of fermented vegetables are a good source of additional K2.