A Disclaimer:

I want to keep my word with you. I know you understand that I receive interesting and timely news items from friends all over the world. Most of these items appear to have prophetic relevance. Others are of particular interest in the field of Science, Health & Nutrition, Devotional themes and some touches of Humor.

With a bit of hesitation, I am forwarding some of these items to friends like you via email. My concern is this: some persons who will receive or read the items I choose to forward will assume that I endorse, approve or believe every "iota," and that I am endorsing the author or source. This simply is not true! As you read, you must be discerning, choosy, discriminating and use common sense. If you are going to quote someone, quote the source -- I am not the source, I am the reporter . . . --CW

--CW Says, "To friends everywhere: Millions of Christians and Jews are preparing to celebrate Easter and Passover. The celebration of Passover dates nearly 3500 years among Jews and Easter has been celebrated among Christians for at least 1500 years.

More recently Christians, across many denominational lines, are rediscovering the spiritual treasures hidden within the Passover Celebration. Messianic Christianity has encouraged millions of Christians around the world to recall the joys and blessings that can come with the celebration of Passover.

A current article appearing in Zion's Fire, an attractive newsletter offered by Zion's Hope Ministries, features several attractive pages that picture and explain the Feast of Passover, particularly from the New Testament Christian perspective. It is my sincere hope that many, if not all, of our readers will click on the site we are furnishing below and share in these deeply spiritual treasures."

Behold the Lamb: The Feast of Passover
"Researchers at the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine and Creighton University School of Medicine in Omaha have reported that markedly higher intake of vitamin D is needed to reach blood levels that can prevent or markedly cut the incidence of breast cancer and several other major diseases than had been originally thought.

"The findings are published February 21 in the journal *Anticancer Research.*"
Give Me Something Nice!
Back to Mardi Gras in New Orleans

If there were no other evidence to tell us how close we are to the end of all things, it would be the rate at which time is hurtling into the past. It does not seem like a year since we were in New Orleans giving away books at Mardi Gras. But there again came the call, "Are you going to give away books during the parades?" And our response, once again: "Absolutely!"

Click image above to download a free PDF report and read the rest of the article ...
Behold the Lamb

“Behold the Lamb...” (Rev. 5:6).

The Biblical Observance

The Meaning of Passover

For more than 400 years, the Jewish people had lived in Egypt (Ex. 12:40). The time had come for God to bring them back to their land as He had promised (Gen. 46:3-4; 50:24). In Exodus 11, God detailed, through His servant Moses, the tenth and final judgment plague which would befall the Egyptians and their false gods. At midnight, the Lord would pass through the land and kill the firstborn of each family and all the cattle.

Written by

Kevin L. Howard
With this final, climactic plague, God would dramatically free His people from the bondage of Egypt.

In Exodus 12, God outlined explicit steps to be taken by those who trusted in Him so that they, unlike Pharaoh and the Egyptians, would not be struck down by the final plague. They were to select a year-old male lamb in its prime. It was to be a perfect lamb without any flaw or defect. It was to be taken out from the flock on the tenth day of the Hebrew month of Nisan and kept until the fourteenth day of the month. This would allow time for each family to become personally attached to their lamb so that it would no longer be just a lamb (Ex. 12:3), but their lamb (Ex. 12:5). This would deeply impress upon them the costly nature of the sacrifice. An innocent one was to die in their place.

On the evening of the fourteenth, as the warm afternoon sun was setting, the lambs were to be publicly killed by “the whole assembly.” All the people were to be responsible for the death of the lambs. Yet, in contrast, each family was to individually apply the blood of their lamb to the doorposts of their own home as a visible sign of their faith in the Lord (Ex. 12:13). At that moment, the innocent lamb became their substitute making it possible for the Lord’s judgment to “pass over” them. And so the Lord instituted Passover as “a night to be much observed unto the Lord for bringing them out from the land of Egypt” (Ex. 12:42).

The Time of Passover

By biblical definition, Passover is a one-day feast that is immediately followed by the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread. Both feasts today are usually blurred together as a single entity and simply called “Passover.”

God ordained that Passover be observed each year on the fourteenth day of the Hebrew month, Nisan (March-April), the day that God delivered His people from Egypt (Ex. 12:6; Lev. 23:5; Num. 9:3; 28:16). His deliverance was so mighty and awesome that Israel’s religious calendar was forever altered. In commemoration of this miraculous deliverance, the month of Nisan (also known as Abib before the Babylonian captivity, Ex. 13:4; 34:18) became the first month of the Hebrew religious year from that time forward (Ex. 12:2; Num. 9:5; 28:16).

The Record of Passover

By all biblical accounts, the lamb was the core requisite for Passover (Ex. 12; 34:25; Dt. 16:1-7). It was the centerpiece of all that was accomplished. If there was no lamb, there would be no deliverance. So central was the lamb to Passover observance that the term “the Passover” came to be used interchangeably of the lamb as well as the holiday (Ex. 12:21; Dt. 16:2, 6; cf. Lk. 22:7; 1 Cor. 5:7). One could not exist without the other. The lamb embodied the holiday, and without it, the holiday was meaningless.

In all, God required three symbolic foods to be eaten that Passover night — the lamb, matzah (unleavened bread), and bitter herbs (Ex. 12:8). The sacrifice was to be a young lamb, depicting innocence. It was to be roasted with fire portraying the judgment that would befall the firstborn. Matzah (unleavened bread) was to be eaten symbolizing the purity of the sacrifice since leaven, with its souring characteristic, was often a symbol of sin (1 Cor. 5:6-8). Bitter herbs were to be eaten as a reminder of the suffering of the lamb.

The Importance of Passover

Several important facts must be understood regarding the observance of Passover. There was only one Passover when the Lord passed through the land in judgment. Every observance since then has been a memorial commemorating that occasion (Ex. 13:3).

Passover holds great distinction among the religious feasts of the world. Passover is the oldest continuously observed feast in existence today, celebrated for some 3,500
years. Passover was celebrated in the Sinai wilderness one year after Israel left Egypt (Num. 9:1-14); it was celebrated as the Jewish people came into the land of Israel (Josh. 5:10-12); it was celebrated in the days of King Hezekiah (2 Chr. 30) and King Josiah (2 Ki. 23:21-23; 2 Chr. 35:1-19); it was celebrated after the return from Babylonian captivity (Ezra 6:19-20); and Passover was celebrated extensively in the days of Jesus (Jn. 11:55). Even today, more Jewish people keep Passover than any of the other Jewish holy days. It is a strong, cohesive force within the fabric of Jewish culture and community.

The observance of Passover was so important that God graciously gave an alternate date for those who were unable to observe Passover on Nisan 14. Those who had become defiled by touching a dead body or were away on a long journey could celebrate Passover thirty days later on the fourteenth of the second month (Num. 9:1-14; cf. 2 Chr. 30:2, 15). None of the other divinely appointed feasts had this accommodation.

The Service of Passover

God commanded that Passover be observed as a memorial forever (Ex. 12:14). He also declared that it was to be kept by a service (Ex. 12:25). This service was to incorporate the lamb, matzah (unleavened bread), and bitter herbs and to raise questions in the minds of the children so that the Exodus story could be rehearsed from generation to generation (Ex. 12:26-27). The Lord, however, did not detail the order of the service, only that it was to be kept.

Several centuries before Christ, a somewhat traditionalized Passover service began to emerge. This ritual Passover service was called the Seder (pronounced SAY-der) from the Hebrew word meaning “order.” It prescribed the traditional order of the Scripture readings, prayers, symbolic foods, and songs in the Passover service. The basic order of the Passover Seder today remains much as it was 2,000 years ago even though the service continued to be embellished with more songs and traditions up through the Middle Ages.

The Modern Observance
Passover

SALT WATER symbolizes the Jewish tears shed during Egyptian bondage and God’s miraculous parting of the Red Sea.

ELIJAH’S CUP is the extra cup of wine poured in the hope that the prophet Elijah might come and announce the arrival of the Messiah. Rabbinic tradition holds that the Messiah will come during Passover, the season of redemption, to bring about the final redemption from dispersion. However, according to Malachi 4:5, Elijah must appear first.

CANDLES are lit at sunset and a prayer pronounced over them by the mother of the house to begin the Passover service. The candles, with their bright warm glow, symbolize the solemnity of the occasion and set Passover apart as a special day.

THE KIPPA (Hebrew) or Yarmulke (Yiddish) is the small head covering worn by Jewish males to show reverence for God. There is no command for such a practice in Scripture, but it arose by tradition in postbiblical times.

WINE is a symbol of joy. Rabbinic law commands four cups of wine to be taken during the Seder to symbolize the fourfold expression of the Lord’s promised deliverance (Ex. 6:6-7). According to rabbinic law, this wine must be red.

THREE MATZAH (unleavened bread) are placed on the Passover table with one in each pocket of the embroidered matzah tash (linen bag). Some rabbinic authorities suggest that the three matzahs represent the three groups of Jewish people: the priests, the Levites, and the Israelites. However, there is no biblical basis for this explanation.

THE SHANKBONE of a lamb is a stark reminder of the Passover lamb sacrificed each year in the days of the Temple. The sacrificial system ceased with the Roman destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70.

MAROR (bitter herbs), usually ground horseradish, is a mandatory item for Passover. It is a reminder of the bitterness which the Israelites suffered as slaves in Egypt.

KARPAS, usually parsley, bitter lettuce, or watercress, is considered a bitter herb. Its green color is a reminder of the springtime during which Passover occurs and also of the hyssop plant used to apply the blood to the doorposts.

HAROSET is a sweet mixture of finely chopped apple, nuts, cinnamon, and wine made to resemble the red-brown clay and mortar used by Israel in building the bricks of Pharaoh’s pyramids. Its sweetness is a reminder of the sweetness of God’s redemption from slavery.

HAZERET is a whole bitter herb such as horseradish, radish, or onion. It is in addition to the maror since the biblical command in Numbers 9:11 is to eat the meal with bitter herbs (plural).
The Passover Seder

Before the arrival of Passover, pains-taking preparation takes place within the Jewish home to rid it of all leavened bread and related products. Houses are scrubbed, pockets turned inside out and laundered, cooking utensils are scalped, and everyday dinnerware and flatware are replaced with the finest Passover china, silver, and crystal.

The Passover service itself is usually quite lengthy as the Passover story unfolds through the many prayers, songs, and narrative readings in the Haggadah. The Seder sometimes lasts until midnight or even the early hours of the morning before tired family members wander off to bed.

As the family is seated, special seating arrangements are observed. The leader sits at the head of the festive dinner table. The youngest sits at his right side in order to fulfill a special role later in the Seder. The second child sits at the head of the festive dinner table. The leader. This was the context of the apostle John reclining upon Jesus at their Passover supper. John recorded, “Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved” (Jn. 13:23). This would indicate that John sat to the right of the Savior and was the youngest at the meal, a position consistent with early Church tradition that John was the youngest apostle. John would have had the honor of asking the questions that night.

The First Cup

The Lord used four expressions to describe His promised deliverance from Egypt: “I will bring you out”; “I will rid you out of their bondage”; “I will redeem you”; and “I will take you to me for a people” (Ex. 6:6-7). Since wine is often a symbol of the joy of harvest, four cups of wine are taken during the Passover service to reflect the fourfold joy of the Lord’s redemption.

To begin the service, the father pours the first cup of wine and asks everyone to rise from the table. The father then lifts his cup toward heaven and recites the Kiddush (“prayer of sanctification”) to set the day apart to God.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, Who createst the fruit of the vine. Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, Who hast chosen us for Thy service from among the nations. . . . Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, Who has kept us in life, Who has kept us, and has enabled us to reach this season.

It was the Messiah, as the leader of the Seder service observed in the Upper Room, who said the Kiddush. “And he took the cup, and gave thanks” (Lk. 22:17).

The Washing of Hands

The second ceremony of the Seder is known as the “washing of the hands.” One of the family members brings a pitcher of water, bowl, and towel to each person at the table to wash his hands. The ceremony is a symbolic act of purification as they prepare to handle the food.

It was probably this ceremony in the Seder that the Messiah used to teach His disciples an object lesson. “He [Jesus] riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments, and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded” (Jn. 13:4-5). His object lesson demonstrated that He was about to become the suffering Servant of the Lord, and as such, He would be the One to cleanse them.

The Green Vegetable

After the hands are washed, the karpas (green vegetable) is dipped into the salt water and eaten. The green vegetable is a reminder that Passover occurs in the springtime. The salt water is a reminder of the tears of pain and suffering shed by the Jewish people in slavery.

The Middle Matzah

Next, the leader removes the middle matzah from the linen bag to break it in half. Half is replaced, and half is carefully wrapped in a linen napkin and hidden away in the house while the children cover their eyes. It reappears later in the service to illustrate a very important truth.

The Four Questions

At this point, the youngest child is called on to recite his diligently rehearsed part. The child asks Passover questions to fulfill Exodus 12:26: “When your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service?”

Beaming with joy and accomplishment the child will ask:

Why is this night different from all other nights? On all other nights, we eat either leavened or unleavened bread, but on this night, only unleavened bread? On all other nights, we eat all kinds of herbs, but on this night, only bitter herbs? On all other nights, we do not dip even once, but on this night, we dip twice? On all other nights, we eat either sitting or reclining, but on this night, we eat reclining?

Often the youngest will recline upon the leader. This was the context of the apostle John reclining upon Jesus at their Passover supper. John recorded, “Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved” (Jn. 13:23). This would indicate that John sat to the right of the Savior and was the youngest at the meal, a position consistent with early Church tradition that John was the youngest apostle. John would have had the honor of asking the questions that night.

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The mother of the house ushers in the holiday by lighting the Passover candles. She then covers her eyes with her hands and recites a Hebrew blessing over the candles thanking God for the special occasion: “Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who has set us apart by His Word, and in whose Name we light the festival lights.”

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The Second Cup

Next, the second cup of wine is poured, and in response to the four questions, a lengthy narrative recounting the Passover story begins. The story relates the whole panorama of the beginnings of the nation: the calling of Abraham in Ur; God’s promises to the patriarchs; the story of Joseph and his brothers; the enslavement of the Jewish nation; the deliverance brought at the hand of Moses; and the giving of the Law at Sinai.

As the ten plagues are described, a tiny bit of wine is poured out for each plague. This expresses the sorrow felt for the suffering of the Egyptians. As the Passover story unfolds, the Seder tray and its symbolic elements are carefully explained and woven into the telling of the Passover story.

Before the second cup of wine is taken, the first half of the praise psalms, known in Judaism as the Hallel (Ps. 113-118), is recited responsively. Hallel is a Hebrew word meaning “praise.” This word has made its way into many languages in the form of halleluyah, meaning “praise Jehovah.” According to the Talmud, which records the ancient rabbinic commentary on Jewish practice, the Levites would chant this group of psalms while the Passover lambs for each family were being sacrificed.

The Dipping of the Matzah

In preparation for the meal, everyone present washes his hands a second time for ceremonial cleansing.

Then the upper matzah and the remainder of the middle matzah are broken into pieces and distributed to everyone. Each person must eat a piece of matzah dipped in the horseradish and haroset (apple mixture). This is a reminder of the sweetness of God’s redemption in the midst of their bitter slavery.

Each person then puts a filling of horseradish between two pieces of the matzah. This is called the “Hillel Sandwich.” It is named in honor of the brilliant and revered first-century rabbi who taught that enough of the bitter herb should be taken to bring tears to the eyes. In this way, each participant can personally identify with his forefathers who were slaves in Egypt.

It was this ritual which gave rise to another important event in the Last Supper. The Messiah foretold that one of the disciples would betray Him (Jn. 13:21-27). Peter motioned to John who was reclining against Jesus to inquire of whom this was spoken. Jesus replied that it would be the one to whom He gave a dipped sop (broken piece of matzah). Jesus dipped the matzah and gave it to Judas Iscariot.

Next, the second cup of wine is poured and sipped. It was here in the Passover Seder that the Messiah instituted the Lord’s table. Luke reveals that it was “the cup after supper” (Lk. 22:20), the third cup or Cup of Redemption, that Jesus chose to be a reminder of His work on the cross.

The Dinner

Next, the dinner is served. In the day of Jesus, it would have consisted of roasted lamb, served with bitter herbs and matzah. Today, however, the meal is far more varied and sumptuous. A traditional Passover meal may include delicious Jewish dishes of gefilte fish, matzah ball soup, glazed chicken, matzah nut stuffing, potato kugel, honeyed carrots, stewed fruit, and sponge cake. In every way it is a meal fit for a king!
LORD” (Mal. 4:5).

Many believe that Elijah will be one of the two messianic witnesses mentioned in Revelation 11 since one of them will perform the miracles of Elijah. Although the Scripture teaches that Elijah will return in the future, it does not name the two witnesses, and one cannot be absolutely dogmatic about their identification.

The Fourth Cup

The fourth cup of wine, called the Cup of Acceptance, or Praise, is poured and taken. It was this cup that the Messiah said He would not drink until He drank it with the disciples in the Kingdom (Mt. 26:29). He knew that the hour of His acceptance by His Jewish nation was yet future, and therefore His joy would not be full until then.

The Closing Hymn

At the conclusion of the service, a hymn is usually sung or recited. This was also the tradition in the day of Jesus. Matthew states, “And when they had sung an hymn, they went out” (Mt. 26:30). Perhaps since Matthew was writing to a Jewish audience, he knew that they would know the name of the hymn since, by tradition, every Seder ends with the latter half of the Hallel (Ps. 115-118).

How ironic that just hours before Jesus was betrayed and went to the cross, He sang the prophetic words of Psalm 118: “The stone which the builders refused is become the head of the corner. This is the LORD’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD! O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the LORD” (Ps. 118:22-26). The Messiah sang these words just hours before He fulfilled them in becoming the stone that was refused by the religious leaders (cf. Mt. 21:42; Mk. 12:10; Acts 4:11).

How utterly tragic that the majority of the Jewish nation did not realize the truth of this Psalm, that the Messiah would first be rejected and suffer before He would reign on David’s throne. How doubly tragic, since Psalm 118 was generally viewed as messianic and was even sung to Jesus proclaiming Him the Messiah at His so-called triumphal entry. Matthew recorded: “And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna [Hebrew for ‘Save now’] to the Son of David [a messianic title]! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!” (Mt. 21:9).

The Fulfillment

Since the entire Passover service is woven with rich symbolism, it must be asked: “Why three matzahs?” One rabbinic tradition holds that they represent the three groups of Jewish people: the priests, the Levites, and the Israelites. Another tradition holds that they represent the three patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Yet rabbinic tradition is at a loss to explain why the middle matzah must be broken. Why must the Levites be broken and not the other groups? Or, why must Isaac be broken and not Abraham nor Jacob? Rabbinic tradition is silent on such an important issue.

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Neither explanation fits the symbolism behind this breaking ceremony. In reality, the triunity of the Godhead is being symbolized — three persons within the oneness of God, just as three matzahs are in the oneness of the linen bag. The second person of the Godhead, the Son, came to earth as the Messiah. He was broken (died), wrapped, and hidden away (buried), and brought back at the third cup of wine (resurrected the third day).

At first glance, this assertion may appear to be a fanciful attempt to Christianize the Jewish Passover, but the evidence overwhelmingly argues to the contrary. First, the afikomen was not present in the day of Jesus. It was a later addition to the Passover. The last solid food taken in that day was the lamb at the dinner. Rabbinic tradition holds that the afikomen now represents the lamb, and therefore everyone must eat of it.

Secondly, there is much debate among the rabbis concerning the meaning of the word afikomen. The problem is compounded since afikomen does not exist in the Hebrew language. It is just not there! Rabbinic concensus usually explains that it means dessert since it is eaten after the meal where the dessert would normally be eaten. Amazingly, afikomen is the only Greek word (the common language of Jesus’ day) in the Passover Seder. Everything else is Hebrew. It is the second aorist form of the Greek verb ἠνεκομίαος. The translation is electrifying. It simply means — He came.

Many traditions have developed around the afikomen. Moroccan Jews save a piece of the afikomen for use when traveling at sea throughout the year. They believe that if a piece of the afikomen is tossed into the stormy waves, it will still the waters. It is easy to see the origin of this tradition as Jesus spoke and calmed the stormy Sea of Galilee.

It must be asked, “How could the afikomen, if it speaks of Jesus, make its way into the Jewish Passover when the majority of Jewish people today do not accept Jesus as the Messiah?” The situation in the first century must be examined to shed light on this question.

At the Feast of Weeks (also known as Shavuot or “Pentecost”) in Acts 2, three thousand sons of Israel from many different countries believed on the Lord. The total count was actually much higher since the three thousand did not include the women or children. These Jewish believers would have taken the message
of the Savior with them to their Jewish brethren as they returned to their homelands. Many undoubtedly came to the Lord as a result of their testimony. In Acts 21:20, James and all the elders told Paul, “Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are who believe.” They were talking only about Jewish believers in Jerusalem and numbered them in the thousands. Some estimate that by the end of the first century there were one million Jewish believers in the Messiah. While this was certainly not a majority within the nation, it was a large enough number to send shock waves throughout synagogues everywhere concerning the messiahship of Jesus.

Another first-century event not only set the stage but mandated a change in the Passover observance. The Roman war machine rolled into Israel and, in A.D. 70, leveled the breathtaking Temple. This was a disaster of the highest magnitude since the majority of the Levitical law was based upon the Temple and its sacrifices. Without the Temple, there could be no more sacrifices. Without the sacrifices, there could be no more Passover lamb, for the Lord had strictly commanded, “Thou shalt, therefore, sacrifice the passover unto the Lord thy God, of the flock and the herd, in the place which the Lord shall choose to place his name there” (Dt. 16:2). Without the Passover lamb, the future of Passover observance was threatened. The Jewish people faced the dilemma of ceasing to observe Passover or changing it to be observed without a lamb.

In addition, Jewish believers had already broken away from the sacrificial system, believing that the Messiah had made a once-and-for-all sacrifice upon the cross. They were already celebrating Passover without the lamb, choosing to incorporate the broken matzah (afikomen) into the service at the precise point at which the Lord had said, “This do in remembrance of me.” It is not difficult to imagine this tradition being borrowed by others seeking to switch to a “lambless” Passover without their even realizing the full significance behind the ceremony.

Ultimately, Passover foreshadowed the Jewish Messiah as the true Passover Lamb. The Hebrew prophet Isaiah spoke of the Messiah in terms of the Passover lamb and of the greater redemption that He would bring (Isaiah 53). He would be the innocent, pure Lamb upon whom the judgment of God would fall in place of the people. He would be the One who, with great bitterness of suffering and death, would shed His blood to provide the greater deliverance from sin.

How tragic that in millions of Jewish homes today the most obscure ceremony in the Passover (the afikomen) is the one that gives it its greatest and most powerful meaning. The afikomen (the “He came”) has been an annual reminder that the Messiah, the true Passover Lamb, has already come.

And so, year after year, the small voices of children drift through the night: “Why is this night different?” And the message of the afikomen echoes back in reply, “He came,” for it was on this holiday that the true Passover Lamb was crucified, buried, and on the third day rose again to provide the greater redemption, the deliverance from sin. It is only in Him that the Passover message finds its fullness. The Lamb still cannot be separated from the holiday.

There is no question that Jesus is the Passover Lamb. Scripture records it. History echoes it. Yet one final Passover question remains, and it is the most important of all: “Is He your Passover Lamb — have you placed your trust in the Messiah and His sacrifice as your only hope of Heaven?” Even as the ancient Israelite was required to individually apply the blood to his door, so, too, today men and women must individually make a decision concerning the Lamb of God. There is still no deliverance without the Lamb.
Markedly Higher Vitamin D Intake Needed to Reduce Cancer Risk, Researchers Say

ScienceDaily (Feb. 28, 2011) — Researchers at the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine and Creighton University School of Medicine in Omaha have reported that markedly higher intake of vitamin D is needed to reach blood levels that can prevent or markedly cut the incidence of breast cancer and several other major diseases than had been originally thought.

The findings are published February 21 in the journal Anticancer Research.

While these levels are higher than traditional intakes, they are largely in a range deemed safe for daily use in a December 2010 report from the National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine.

"We found that daily intakes of vitamin D by adults in the range of 4000-8000 IU are needed to maintain blood levels of vitamin D metabolites in the range needed to reduce by about half the risk of several diseases -- breast cancer, colon cancer, multiple sclerosis, and type 1 diabetes," said Cedric Garland, DrPH, professor of family and preventive medicine at UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center. "I was surprised to find that the intakes required to maintain vitamin D status for disease prevention were so high -- much higher than the minimal intake of vitamin D of 400 IU/day that was needed to defeat rickets in the 20th century."

"I was not surprised by this" said Robert P. Heaney, MD, of Creighton University, a distinguished biomedical scientist who has studied vitamin D need for several decades. "This result was what our dose-response studies predicted, but it took a study such as this, of people leading their everyday lives, to confirm it."

The study reports on a survey of several thousand volunteers who were taking vitamin D supplements in the dosage range from 1000 to 10,000 IU/day. Blood studies were conducted to determine the level of 25-vitamin D -- the form in which almost all vitamin D circulates in the blood.

"Most scientists who are actively working with vitamin D now believe that 40 to 60 ng/ml is the appropriate target concentration of 25-vitamin D in the blood for preventing the major vitamin D-deficiency related diseases, and have joined in a letter on this topic," said Garland. "Unfortunately, according a recent National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, only 10 percent of the US population has levels in this range, mainly people who work outdoors."

Interest in larger doses was spurred in December of last year, when a National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine committee identified 4000 IU/day of vitamin D as safe for every day use by adults and children.
nine years and older, with intakes in the range of 1000-3000 IU/day for infants and children through age eight years old.

While the IOM committee states that 4000 IU/day is a safe dosage, the recommended minimum daily intake is only 600 IU/day.

"Now that the results of this study are in, it will become common for almost every adult to take 4000 IU/day," Garland said. "This is comfortably under the 10,000 IU/day that the IOM Committee Report considers as the lower limit of risk, and the benefits are substantial." He added that people who may have contraindications should discuss their vitamin D needs with their family doctor.

"Now is the time for virtually everyone to take more vitamin D to help prevent some major types of cancer, several other serious illnesses, and fractures," said Heaney.

Other co-authors of the article were Leo Baggerly, PhD, and Christine French.


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Give Me Something Nice!
Back to Mardi Gras in New Orleans

If there were no other evidence to tell us how close we are to the end of all things, it would be the rate at which time is hurtling into the past. It does not seem like a year since we were in New Orleans giving away books at Mardi Gras. But there again came the call, “Are you going to give away books during the parades?” And our response, once again: “Absolutely!”

The rolling and packaging of the books commenced. We planned to take thousands of books to an event which realistically could have accommodated hundreds of thousands more; but you do what you can as God makes provision for your efforts—right?

This year we decided to try a new tactic: we packaged a couple of boxes of books, then stood a bagful at bus stops along the parade route of the satellite community of Metairie. Once the parade began, we began our distribution to the crowds; once our supply ran out, we exited the parade and grabbed another bagful at the next bus stop, then went right back into the crowd. Within a couple of hours we had given away thousands of books to the crowds pleading, “Me! Me! Me! Give me something nice.”

A long-time veteran of book distribution, Emile Spalitta, made the suggestion that we try something similar the next day in New Orleans. So we devised a plan to place similar bags of books along the Saint Charles Avenue parade route once the cleaning regiment had gone through. At midnight that night we stood a bag at the corner of each block for almost a mile (the parade was scheduled to travel seven miles, with an estimated attendance of a million people). By 2 A.M. we were ready for bed.

The next day we parked in New Orleans and walked through the teeming crowds to where our first stack of books was waiting for us. The method again worked perfectly. The books were protected inside the big plastic bags, and simply blended in with the paraphernalia that campers and attendees of the parade had left overnight. As the floats started their procession, we began our distribution as the night before. Again, within a few hours we had successfully given away thousands more publications.

Our thanks are due to you, without whom our work would not be possible—thank you!

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