

Gloria's Story – She Lives Like a Vampire

My oldest daughter is 16, and for years I have called her "the Sponge". Just like a sponge, she seems to soak up any germ that came within 500 feet of her! If I had a nickel for every hour I have spent with this child at the pediatrician's office waiting for the result of quick strep tests, I'd be a wealthy woman.

I have 9 year old twins, a boy and a girl. They also have frequent colds and usually catch whatever is going around the school. They bounce back from a sickness quicker than my beloved Sponge, though. I have asked the pediatrician why some kids seem to never or rarely miss a day of school while my older daughter spends at least five weeks a year at home with some kind of virus. The doctor just shrugs and says, "All kids are different." Meanwhile, I am on a first name basis with the staff in the high school attendance office, and they all recognize my voice on the phone.

My husband blames all of this on me. I have gotten to the point where I tune out when I hear him say, "You baby her! She could really be at school!" or "She lives like a vampire!" "You have to make her eat a better diet!" Personally, I consider it a triumph when she eats anything I prepare because, when she is not at home sick, she is on the run to a date, a study group, an enrichment class, a meeting after school to make up a test. She is in perpetual motion and all I usually see is the brand on her jeans as she goes out the door with a, "Bye, Ma. Don't wait for me for dinner." Translation: "See you later. I'm off to eat junk food with my friends."

I was telling my tale of woe at a recent Suppers meeting. Other parents of adolescents were nodding and smiling. I have been attending Suppers meetings for over a year and I have learned a lot about how to eat for health. I know my family's dietary habits have improved enormously – very little sugar, no trans fats, lots of in season fruits and vegetables and no more oil soaked, salt laden take out! I don't torture myself wondering about what they eat when they are not at home, I can't control that. At least I have managed to get all my kids to eat healthy foods when they are at my table. So, why is my oldest daughter still a Petri dish for every new germ that comes to town?

Our Suppers meeting regularly reviews books on nutrition and health and sometimes we have guest speakers. A nutritionist who came to talk about good fats and bad fats turned a light on for me when he asked me a very simple question, "Does she ever go outside...during the day?" He looked at me over his glasses and said, "Do you know what her vitamin D level is?" He then gave a short and extremely informative lecture on the importance of vitamin D3 as a disease and inflammation fighter. To quote my daughter, I thought, "OMG!" My teen never sees the sun for more than five minutes a day!" I drive her to and from school so she won't get tired out and get sick. She is in a class room all day. She doesn't play sports because she is absent too often to be a reliable member of a team. She usually goes out after 6 p.m.

Right after the Suppers meeting, I called my pediatrician and requested a vitamin D level for all three of my kids. The results were not surprising -- they all had low Vitamin D levels but my teen's level was in the cellar! I started her on vitamin D3 the very next day.

It has been five months since my daughter started vitamin D3 supplements. She has recently been in contact with friends who have come down with strep, flu and various viral conditions. My daughter has not missed a day of school. She did catch a cold a few weeks ago but it was mild and resolved in three days. My other two kids had some cases of flu in their class. They didn't get sick at all and have been completely well since starting vitamin D3. I also boot everyone out in to the sunshine every day for at least 30 minutes.

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I understand that this vitamin is not the answer for every child who's a sponge for viruses. But it certainly was a good match between our problem and our solution. My older daughter is now walking everywhere instead of being chauffeured by yours truly. She's complaining, but I tell her it is good for the environment and it will give her nice calves.