Vitamin D

What is vitamin D?

Vitamin D is a fat-soluble vitamin. It is also known as "calciferol." During certain times of the year at specific latitudes and longitudes sunlight on our skin can start vitamin D synthesis. However, often this does not provide enough vitamin D and we need additional vitamin D from foods, fortified foods, or supplements.

Why do I need vitamin D?

Vitamin D helps bone health by promoting calcium uptake and keeping enough calcium and phosphorus for bone growth and bone replacement. Without vitamin D our bones can become weak and thin. Research has also found that vitamin D deficiency could have an impact on diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, cognition, and muscle pain/weakness.

Am I at risk of vitamin D deficiency?

You have an increased risk of deficiency if you spend limited time outside, if you have dark skin, eat little or no dairy foods or are elderly. Also, health conditions that impair your digestion and absorption such as gastric bypass surgery or changes in your liver or kidney function could also put you at risk for deficiency.

Ask your doctor to check your vitamin D level so you know if you are deficient.

How do I get enough vitamin D?

Spend time outside and make sure you are consuming dairy daily to get enough vitamin D. A vitamin D supplement or a multivitamin containing vitamin D may also be good for you. However, ask your doctor or pharmacist before starting a supplement to make sure that it is safe and does not interact with your other medications.

If you are between 19 and 70 years old 600 IU of vitamin D is advised per day. If you are older than 70 then 800 IU is advised daily. If a lab test shows you are deficient in vitamin D, then your doctor will suggest a higher amount of daily vitamin D for a short time until the deficiency is treated.

Dietary supplements contain either D2 or D3. These are different forms of vitamin D. D3 may be more effective at maintaining your vitamin D level.

What are food sources of vitamin D?

There are not very many natural food sources of vitamin D. Orange juice, cereal, milk, and yogurt are often fortified with vitamin D. Check the nutrition facts label to determine the exact amount of vitamin D you are consuming.

Soy, almond, oat milk or milk substitutes also often have vitamin D added. Check the nutrition facts label to ensure they are good sources of vitamin D. Your dietitian can help you read the nutrition facts label for vitamin D content if you are unsure.

Below is a list of some food sources of vitamin D with the serving size and amount of vitamin D it provides.

Food Source	Serving Size	Vitamin D (IU)
Salmon (sockeye)	3oz cooked	570 IU
Trout (rainbow)	3oz cooked	645 IU
Egg	1 large, cooked	44 IU
White mushrooms, exposed to ultraviolet light	½ cup sliced	366 IU
Tuna fish (light), canned in water	3oz	40 IU
Milk with vitamin D	8oz	120 IU

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