

The Wellness News

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Vitamin D

Vitamin D is a fat soluble vitamin that your body requires for accomplishing many important tasks. It is a much overlooked vitamin and recent studies show that more and more Americans, especially children, are vitamin D deficient. So how can you prevent deficiency and get the vitamin D that you need? It used to be as simple as soaking up some daily sunshine, but there is more that you may need to know.

Why do our bodies need vitamin D?

- Vitamin D increases our ability to absorb calcium and phosphorus at more than twice the rate of normal absorption. This extra absorption helps keep bones at their strongest.
- Some studies have shown that not having enough vitamin D is associated with muscle weakness. For maximum muscular function, vitamin D is necessary.
- Research has also linked low levels of vitamin D with high blood pressure. In addition, vitamin D deficiency is related to high blood sugar levels. These two factors combined increase the risk of heart disease by four times the normal rate.

So, how much Vitamin D do you need?

The Recommended Daily Allowances (RDAs) for vitamin D are:

- age 50 or under: 200 IU
- age 51-70: 400 IU
- over age 70: 600 IU

Types of Vitamin D: Vitamin D2 and vitamin D3 are important to humans. Vitamin D2 is synthesized by plants. Vitamin D3 is synthesized by humans in the skin when it is exposed to UVB rays from sunlight.

Foods may be fortified with vitamin D2 or D3. Both are used in over-the-counter vitamin D supplements. Look for vitamin D3 in your supplement as vitamin D2 is about 25% less potent.

Vitamin D deficiency: Your body stores vitamin D in body fat and can store enough to carry you through the winter if you get adequate amounts from food and sunlight in the summer and fall. UV rays from the sun are too weak during the winter months to aid in vitamin D production. You are most susceptible to these weak rays if you live north of an imaginary line that runs between Los Angeles and Atlanta. Other factors that increase your risk of deficiency are eating a limited diet, severely limiting exposure to the sun, and wearing sunscreen at all times.

Make sure you get the OK from your doctor before starting a supplement

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Ways to increase your intake of Vitamin D

Sunlight and vitamin D: Traditionally, sunlight was the best way to get vitamin D. Today, most Americans aren't exposed to enough sun during the winter months, especially those individuals who live in the northern states. Even during the summer it is hard to get enough vitamin D because of increased sunscreen use. Wearing sunscreen is important to protect against rays that are dangerous; however, these products block the UV rays that produce vitamin D in our bodies. This lack of sun exposure can lead to vitamin D deficiency, which is why it is important to incorporate food and supplement sources of vitamin D into your diet.

If possible, expose your skin to sunlight for very brief periods of time. In order to be able to produce vitamin D from sunlight, about 50% of your skin needs to be exposed to rays for 5-10 minutes, two to three times each week. People with darker skin need more sun exposure to make the same amount of vitamin D.

Food sources: Although we can get vitamin D from the sun, it is important to make sure you include plenty of vitamin D in your diet.

One of the best sources for Vitamin D is oily fish including halibut, catfish, salmon, and tuna.

Serving Suggestions:

- Serve fish for dinner once or twice a week. Experiment with different herbs, spices and cooking techniques to create a meal your family will enjoy.
- Add canned tuna to a salad for lunch.

Vitamin D can also be found in beverages such as milk, soy milk, and fortified orange juice.

Serving Suggestions:

- Include an 8 ounce glass of 100% orange juice fortified with calcium and vitamin D with your morning bowl of cereal.
- Drink a glass of 1% milk with whole grain crackers for a snack.
- Add soymilk to your coffee or tea.

Some other great food sources of vitamin D include eggs and yogurt.

Serving Suggestions: Have a hard boiled egg or a cup of low fat yogurt for a snack.

Can I get too much Vitamin D?

Vitamin D toxicity is extremely rare but can be caused by accidentally or intentionally consuming excessively high doses. Doses of more than 50,000 IU per day are associated with very high levels of calcium and phosphate.

Prevention: Aim for 1,000 IU of vitamin D a day from food, supplements and multivitamins combined. It's safe to take up to 2,000 IU a day from vitamin D supplements, however if you're prone to kidney stones check with your doctor before taking more than 1,000 IU a day. Vitamin D is included in most multivitamins, usually in strengths from 50 IU to 1,000 IU.



Call Your Health Coach for More Information 1-800-433-2320