

# Vitamin D

## Why do I need vitamin D?

Vitamin D helps absorb calcium and phosphorus from the intestines so it can be absorbed by the bones, keeping the skeleton strong. Children who get too little vitamin D can develop rickets, a bone deforming condition that can lead to bowlegs and knock-knees. In adults, a D shortage can contribute to osteoporosis, the "brittle bones" disease, and bring on pain in the bones and joints.

## What are good sources of Vitamin D?

Your body can actually manufacture D on its own (with a little help from the sun); technically, that makes it a hormone, not a vitamin. With 10 to 15 minutes of direct sunshine on your hands and face three times a week, most people can make all they need. But because your exposure to sunlight can vary widely depending on the time of year, your location, and other factors, experts recommend that you fulfil your daily requirement through your diet or through supplements if necessary. Many types of milk, along with some breads and cereals, are fortified with vitamin D. You can also find D naturally in fatty fish such as salmon.

## Do I need a supplement?

You might need a supplement if you're older than 50, don't get much sun, and don't eat much milk and cereal. Many people may not get enough direct sun in the winter to meet their vitamin D needs. This is particularly a problem for older people, whose bodies don't synthesise the vitamin as efficiently and who may not be able to stomach dairy products. Most multivitamins contain 270 mg (400 IU) of D. People over 70 can pick up another 135 mg (200 IU) by adding a calcium-plus-D supplement. They're easier to find than D alone, and you probably need the extra calcium anyway. Whelehans supply Lifeplan vitamin D which contains 400IU vitamin D for €4 (30pk)

## Can I get too much?

But taking more than 1350 mg (2,000 IU) of vitamin D a day in supplement form can cause headaches and fatigue. At that dose, calcium builds up in the blood, heart valves, and kidneys, which can eventually prove fatal. You can't get too much vitamin D from sunshine.

## New Research

New research has found that a daily supplement of 700 to 1000IU of vitamin D reduces the risk of fractures from falls among older people by 19%. In-fact the British Medical Journal shows that a dose of less than 700IU per day has no effect in reducing fractures.

## Drug interactions

Some blood pressures called diuretics (eg) Thiazides can reduce the urinary excretion of vitamin D hence increasing the risk of too much vitamin D. Some epilepsy medication such as phenytoin can reduce vitamin D levels.