

VITAMIN D

The Body's Need for Vitamin D

- Important for bone health by promoting calcium absorption, a key to preventing osteoporosis
- Is linked to improved immune system function
- Aids in the prevention of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and cancer



Sources of Vitamin D

- The main source of vitamin D is the sun! When exposed to sunlight, the skin is able to produce vitamin D, but not enough to meet the body's needs. Sunscreen limits this process even more.
- Additional vitamin D must come from specific foods or supplements

How much do you need?

- The amount of vitamin D a person needs is based on age
- Children: 400-1000 IU/day
- Adults: 1000-2000 IU/day
- Pregnant or breastfeeding: 2000-4000 IU/day

Supplementation

- Over-the-counter vitamins (D2 (ergocalciferol) and D3 (cholecalciferol)) can be used to supplement food intake
- Most people will need an extra 1000-2000 IU per day

Which foods have vitamin D?

- The best food sources for vitamin D are fish oil (salmon, tuna, and mackerel), eggs, and organ meat (such as beef liver)
- Milk and cereal are fortified with vitamin D, but most milk products such as cheese and ice cream are not
- Other sources include orange juice, yogurt, and mushrooms

Am I getting enough?

- Vitamin D levels tend to decrease as a person ages, and are even lower for those who spend the majority of their time indoors or who live in areas with little sunlight
- The only way to know if you are getting enough vitamin D is by having your provider check your blood levels
- Health problems such as Crohn's and Celiac disease interfere with vitamin D absorption, as does obesity

What if I don't get enough?

- Vitamin D deficiency can affect the body at all ages
- A fetus that does not receive enough may have growth retardation and skeletal deformities, which may lead to an increased risk of hip fractures later in life
- Low levels have also been tied to an increase in seasonal illnesses such as colds and the flu
- Calcium is dependent on vitamin D, so a deficiency leads to poor bone growth

References

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