

# Vitamin D

**Your doctor may ask you to buy vitamin D if you have recently received high dose vitamin D treatment or if you are at risk of having low levels of vitamin D.**

## What is Vitamin D?

**Vitamin D**, (cholecalciferol) **helps regulate the amount of calcium and phosphate in the body.** These nutrients are needed to keep bones, teeth and muscles healthy.

## Where does vitamin D come from?

In the spring and summer our bodies make vitamin D naturally when our skin is exposed to sunlight. Food sources of vitamin D include oily fish (salmon, mackerel, sardines and pilchards), red meat, liver and eggs. Some breakfast cereal, margarines, yoghurts and milk have vitamin D added.

You can buy vitamin D in tablet or liquid form (called supplements) from health food shops, pharmacies and larger supermarkets. It is quite cheap to buy over the counter and usually cheaper than the cost of a doctor's prescription.

## What if I don't get enough vitamin D?

Vitamin D is important to health. If you don't get enough you may feel tired, experience muscle aches or even break a bone more easily due to bones becoming weak and soft. Vitamin D deficiency in children can cause rickets.



## Who might not get enough vitamin D?

Some people are at risk of not making enough vitamin D naturally. These include people with darker skin tones, (people of Asian, African, Afro-Caribbean and Middle Eastern descent) that live in the UK; older people because their skin is not as good at making vitamin D; people who cover their skin when they go outside; people who don't get out of their house very often or don't spend much time outside; and pregnant and breastfeeding women who may need more vitamin D.

## How can I get more vitamin D?

Enjoy time outside in spring and summer and wear clothes with short sleeves or shorts (if you feel comfortable) so that some sun can get to your arms and legs before you apply sun cream. You need to put sun cream on if you are outside for a long period and take care not to burn your skin. If you can't get outside too often it is recommended to take a vitamin D supplement.

## Who should take vitamin D supplements?

Adults and children over 1 year in the UK should consider taking a supplement especially during the autumn and winter months as the sun is not strong enough during this time to make enough vitamin D naturally. People at high-risk should consider taking a supplement throughout the year.

For adults and children over one year the recommended amount of vitamin D to take is 10 micrograms or 400 units per day. You could ask a doctor, nurse, dietitian or pharmacist if you are not sure.

If you have already been treated for vitamin D deficiency you may be advised to take a higher strength supplement by your doctor.

## Further information can be found here:

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/vitamins-and-minerals/vitamin-d/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vitamins-and-minerals/vitamin-d/)

or

[www.bda.uk.com/resource/vitamin-d.html](http://www.bda.uk.com/resource/vitamin-d.html)