

Vitamin D Supplements

Information about vitamin D supplements to treat low vitamin D levels – Maintenance Dose

Why is vitamin D important?

Vitamin D is a hormone made in our bodies when we are in the sun. It is also found in small amounts in foods. Vitamin D is important for bone and muscle health and our immune system.

Why do I need to take vitamin D supplements?

Between October and March in the UK there is not enough sunlight in the UK for our bodies to make enough vitamin D, so all adults and children older than 1 should take a daily vitamin D supplement. Some foods contain vitamin D, but only in small amounts, so it is difficult for people to get enough from food alone.

You do not need a blood test to check your vitamin D level before you start taking a supplement, or while you are taking the supplement.

Some people may need to take a higher dose of vitamin D. For example;

- If a blood test has shown your vitamin D levels are low
- After finishing a course of high dose vitamin D from your doctor
- If you are taking certain medications
- If you have certain medical conditions
- If you have had surgery meaning you do not absorb vitamins and minerals very well
- If you have osteoporosis

You have been identified as being in one of these groups. The person recommending you take a maintenance vitamin D supplement should explain to you the reason you need the supplement.

Can I get vitamin D on prescription?

Vitamin D can only be prescribed for some people with some specific medical conditions. Your doctor will let you know if this applies to you. Other people will need to buy vitamin D.

How much vitamin D should I take?

As you have been identified as needing a **higher dose of vitamin D you should take a supplement containing 800-2000units (this may be written as IU or 20-50 micrograms) a day.** Various strengths of vitamin D are available to purchase from pharmacies, supermarkets and online.

Occasionally a specialist may recommend a higher dose of vitamin D, up to 4000units per day. Please follow the advice of your medical team on the dose of Vitamin D to take.

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Is there vitamin D in my current medications?

Vitamin D is often included in **calcium supplements**, as our bodies need vitamin D to absorb calcium. **Multivitamin and mineral** supplements, and some **Oral Nutritional Supplement drinks** also contain vitamin D, so if you take any of these, you may already be getting some vitamin D. If you are unsure, check with your pharmacist.

Is it possible to take too much Vitamin D?

Supplements containing higher doses of vitamin D, are available and vitamin D can be found in multivitamin and mineral and other supplements. Some vitamin D products are designed to be taken weekly rather than daily. Make sure you check the packing and dose of the product you purchase. Taking more than 4000units (100 micrograms) of vitamin D a day for a long time could be harmful.

Some people have medical conditions that mean they should not take as much vitamin D. If in doubt about which vitamin D product to buy, talk to a pharmacist or your doctor.

Where can I find out more?

[BDA Food Factsheet: Vitamin D](http://www.bda.uk.com/vitamin-d): www.bda.uk.com/vitamin-d

[NHS information on Vitamin D](http://www.nhs.co.uk/conditions/vitamins-and-minerals/vitmain-d): www.nhs.co.uk/conditions/vitamins-and-minerals/vitmain-d