



Vitamin D for adults

Vitamin D is an essential nutrient, also known as the sunshine vitamin. It works with calcium and phosphorous in our bodies to keep bones, muscles and teeth healthy. If we do not have enough vitamin D we may develop softer bones, poorer muscle strength and be more likely to fall as we get older.

How do we get vitamin D?

Most of our vitamin D comes from the action of the sun's ultraviolet (UV), rays on our skin when we spend time outside in the sunlight.

In the UK, the sun is only strong enough for us to make vitamin D from sunlight between April and September.

Most people can make enough vitamin D by being in the sunlight for short periods, ideally between 11am and 3pm, with exposed skin such as the forearms, lower legs or face.

It's important not to get sunburnt so we need to balance getting enough vitamin D and staying safe in the sun.

Make sure you apply sunscreen or cover up before your skin starts to turn red and be very careful not to burn.

How much vitamin D do I need?

Everyone over the age of 1 year should have 10 micrograms (mcg or μg) or 400 international units (IU) of vitamin D per day (Public Health England, 2016). This includes pregnant and breastfeeding women and people at risk of low vitamin D.

Who's at risk of low vitamin D?

- People over 65 years of age.
- Pregnant and breastfeeding women.
- People who spend very little time with their skin exposed to sunlight, for example those who cover their skin for cultural reasons, those who are housebound or indoors for long periods.
- People who have darker skin, for example people of African, African-Caribbean and South Asian family origin.



**Cornwall and
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How can I get vitamin D from food?

It's difficult to get all the vitamin D you need from food but you can help by eating the following foods:

- oily fish such as salmon, mackerel, trout, sardines, pilchards and herring are good sources of vitamin D and there is a smaller amount in canned tuna
- egg yolks, meat and milk contain a small amount of vitamin D
- margarine and some breakfast cereals have vitamin D added

Should I take a vitamin D supplement?

Most people will get enough vitamin D from April to the end of September from sunlight on the skin and a healthy, balanced diet. All adults and children over the age of 1 year should consider taking a daily vitamin D supplement containing 10 micrograms (μg or mcg) or 400 international units (IU) during the autumn and winter months.

People who are in the high risk groups should consider taking a supplement of 10 micrograms (mcg or μg) or 400 IU, of vitamin D all year round.

Vitamin D supplements are widely available to purchase from pharmacies, health food stores, online or in some supermarkets (see the table at the end of this leaflet).

Healthy Start vitamins

Some pregnant women, women with a child under 12 months and children from 6 months to 4 years are entitled to free Healthy Start vitamins containing vitamin D. Please ask your health visitor about this or check online at www.healthystart.nhs.uk.

Can I have too much vitamin D?

Taking a supplement, eating vitamin D rich foods and spending time outside in sunlight isn't a problem. Don't take more than one supplement containing vitamin D (including cod liver oil) as you may be getting too much vitamin D. If you start taking a supplement and are already taking a different vitamin and mineral supplement then please discuss this with your GP, pharmacist or dietitian.



Only take a higher strength vitamin D if you have been advised to do so by your doctor. High doses could be harmful in the long-term. For more information visit nhs.uk/conditions/vitamins-and-minerals/vitamin-d.



Where can I buy vitamin D supplements?

Vitamin D supplements are widely available to buy from pharmacies, supermarkets and health food shops. Always buy supplements from a reliable source rather than an unknown company online.

The price of vitamin D 10µg/ 400IU supplements are approximately 2p to 5p per day, depending on where you buy them and how many you buy at once. A vitamin D supplement only needs to contain 10µg/ 400IU to meet the recommendations.

Useful websites for more information

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

Contact the ICB

Call 01726 627800

Email ciosicb.contactus@nhs.net

Visit cios.icb.nhs.uk

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