



What do I need to know about Vitamin D?

Vitamin D is important for helping to keep your muscles, bones, and teeth strong.



How do we get vitamin D?

Vitamin D is made in our bodies when our skin is exposed to the sun. Due to a lack of sunlight in the UK during the winter months, it is recommended that people take a daily vitamin D supplement.



Sun safety

You do not have to sunbathe to make vitamin D. Strong sunlight can burn skin, so we need to balance making enough vitamin D with being safe in the sun - take care to cover up or protect your skin with sunscreen before you turn red or get burnt. Find out more about sun safety on the NHS website: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/seasonal-health/sunscreen-and-sun-safety/>

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

It is important that we maintain enough vitamin D in our bodies to prevent our bones from becoming weak leaving us more prone to fractures/breaks.

A lack of vitamin D can lead to many bone problems:

- Softening and weakening of bones in children (Rickets)
- Bone pain alongside softening and weakening of bones in adults (Osteomalacia)
- Low bone density/weakening of bones (Osteopenia)
- Weak bones that can break easily (Osteoporosis)



Who needs to take a vitamin D supplement?

Everyone in the UK over the age of 4 is advised to take a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms (400 international units) of vitamin D during the autumn and winter months (October to early March), when we cannot make vitamin D from sunlight.

The Department of Health and Social Care recommends that adults and children over 4 take a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D throughout the year if they:

- are not often outdoors – for example, if they're frail or housebound
- are in an institution like a care home
- usually wear clothes that cover up most of their skin when outdoors

What strength of vitamin D supplement do I need?

For the general population who simply want to maintain their levels of vitamin D but do not have a diagnosis of vitamin D deficiency, 400 IU (10 µg/mcg) is recommended. If you have been diagnosed with vitamin D deficiency, please ask your pharmacist for our more detailed information booklet. You can speak to your local pharmacist if you have any further questions around vitamin D supplements.



Can I take too much vitamin D?

It is possible to take too much vitamin D if you take more than your daily recommended dose of vitamin D supplements. However, taking a **small** vitamin D supplement alongside safe sun exposure and foods that contain vitamin D is not a problem.

Where can I buy vitamin D supplements?

Vitamin D supplements are widely available to buy from community pharmacies, supermarkets, and health food shops as well as online. The average cost of vitamin D supplements in the UK when purchased from the shops mentioned above or online is between 3p - 6p per tablet which works out at between £10 - £20 per year (depending on which brand you choose to buy).