How do I get Vitamin D?

You can get up to one-third of your daily need from the rays of the sunlight touching your skin. Sunlight changes a cholesterol in your body into vitamin D. Although we don’t know exactly how much sun you need, experts suggest you spend 10–15 minutes a week outside in the sun, exposing your face, arms, and legs (without sunscreen). It is important to know that people with darker skin have a harder time getting enough sunlight to make good amounts of vitamin D. If your skin is darker, you may need at least 30 minutes per week. After you have taken the time to get your vitamin D, remember to add your sunscreen!

To get the rest of the vitamin D you need, eat foods and drink beverages that have vitamin D in them. Take a look at the Nutrition Facts label. If the food or beverage meets 25% of the daily value, it has 100 IUs. Below is a list of some of the foods.

- Fish (salmon, catfish, trout, mackerel, canned tuna fish, canned sardines)
- Cod liver oil
- Vitamin D fortified milk and yogurt
- Soy products (soy milk, tofu)
- Vitamin D fortified cereals (Quaker instant oatmeal, Malt-o-meal, Kellogg cereals)
- Eggs (with yolk)
- Liver
- Beef

Am I getting enough Vitamin D?

Here you will find the 2010 Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA) for Vitamin D for generally healthy people. It is important to know that some experts think that some people need more than these amounts.

- 1 year–70 years old: RDA = 600 IU (15 μg) per day
  The safe amount for adults is less than 4,000 IU/day.
- 71+ years: RDA = 800 IU (20 μg) per day
  The safe amount is less than 4,000 IU per day

The experts say there are no convincing reasons to take more than the RDA every day.

Should I take a supplement?

If you do not meet your RDA from food every day, then a dietary supplement is important. Do not take in more than 4,000 IU total from food and supplements.

The only way to know if you have enough vitamin D is for your doctor to do a blood test. Unfortunately, this test is expensive. Also, at this time, the labs vary a great deal in the way they do and interpret these tests. Your doctor will be your guide. This chart tells you what your doctor may suggest after testing your vitamin D level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Blood Level of Vitamin D</th>
<th>Recommendation for Bone Health</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt;20 ng/ml</td>
<td>Healthy. Continue consuming the RDA for your age (above)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-20 ng/ml</td>
<td>You may need 50,000 IU taken 1 time per week for 12 weeks to get back to normal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;10 ng/ml</td>
<td>You may need 50,000 IU taken 2 times per week to get back to normal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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If you have other questions about vitamin D, be sure to ask your doctor at your next visit.