

VITAMIN D

FACTS

- Vitamin D is “the sunshine vitamin” because it is made when sunlight strikes the skin.
- In the body, Vitamin D functions as a hormone.
- It helps the body absorb calcium and maintain strong bones.
- Nerves need Vitamin D to send impulses between the brain and the body.
- It is important to the immune system and helps fight off viruses and bacteria.

SOURCES

- The sun is a good source of Vitamin D, as long as there is 20 minutes of exposure daily without sunscreen.
- Sunscreen is needed to reduce the risk of burn and skin cancer but can limit the body’s ability to make Vitamin D.
- Cloudy days, sitting at a window, and dark skin tones limit the amount of sun that converts to Vitamin D.
- Tanning beds do not stimulate Vitamin D production.
- It is found naturally in only a few food products (e.g., liver, egg yolks, and fatty fish).
- Foods such as margarine, milk, orange juice, yogurt, and breakfast cereals have Vitamin D added during processing.

DEFICIENCY

- Although sun exposure is a source of Vitamin D, the body’s ability to convert the sunlight to the vitamin decreases with age.
- The elderly produce an average of 75% less Vitamin D than younger people.
- Vitamin D deficiency may lead to:
 - Osteoporosis and brittle bones



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- Bone pain and muscle weakness
- Type II diabetes
- Increased risk for some cancers
- Increased risk of autoimmune disorders

SUPPLEMENTS

- A blood test is performed to determine the need for Vitamin D supplements.
- If the blood test comes back low, the provider may recommend taking Vitamin D3 supplements. Supplements can be purchased wherever vitamins and minerals are sold. Look for the USPS label to confirm it is a quality vitamin.