

Do I need to take a vitamin D supplement?

Adults and children over five

Public Health England advises all adults and children over five years to consider taking a daily supplement containing 10mcg (400 units) of vitamin D daily, particularly during autumn and winter.

People who have a higher risk of vitamin D deficiency are advised to take a 10mcg (400 units) supplement all year round.

People at higher risk include:

- Pregnant and breastfeeding women.
- Older people, aged 65 years and over.
- People who have low or no exposure to the sun, for example those who cover their skin for cultural reasons or who are housebound.
- People with darker skin, for example people of African, African-Caribbean or South Asian origin.
- Vegans and those who do not eat fish, or generally have a poor diet.
- People who are obese (BMI>30kg/m²) or have had a gastric bypass.
- People who have malabsorption syndromes or taking certain drugs (antiresorptives, anticonvulsants, rifampicin.)
- People who have a family history of vitamin D deficiency.

Infants and children under five

Breastfed babies from birth to one year of age should be given a daily supplement containing 8.5 to 10mcg of vitamin D, to make sure they get enough.

Babies fed infant formula should **not** be given a vitamin D supplement until they are receiving less than 500ml (about a pint) of infant formula a day, because infant formula is fortified with vitamin D.

Children aged 1 to 4 years old should be given a daily supplement containing 10mcg of vitamin D.

Will my GP prescribe me supplements?

No, your GP will not prescribe any daily vitamin D supplements; these will need to be purchased.

Your GP will prescribe a loading dose of vitamin D **only if you are Vitamin D deficient** (<30nmol/L for adults). After this you should purchase your own vitamin D supplements to take daily.

Supplements for adults

Supplements suitable for adults are available to purchase in a wide range of supermarkets, health food shops and pharmacies from approximately £2.00 for 90 tablets.

Supplements for pregnant women

There are also a wide range of supplements suitable for pregnant women available to purchase in supermarkets and pharmacies.

Some pregnant women are eligible to receive Healthy Start vitamins free, speak to your midwife or visit the Healthy Start website below to find out more.

<https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/>

Supplements for children

There are many supplements suitable for children in supermarkets and pharmacies. These start from approximately £1.50 for 30 tablets. Some children under 4 years are eligible to receive free Healthy Start vitamins. Visit the website below for further information.

If you need any further information please visit:

Your local pharmacist

NHS Choices – www.nhs.uk

Patient UK – www.patient.co.uk


Basildon and Brentwood
Clinical Commissioning Group


Thurrock
Clinical Commissioning Group

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Self-Care Information on Vitamin D

Why do we need vitamin D?

Vitamin D helps to regulate the amount of calcium and phosphate in the body. It helps to keep bones, teeth and muscles healthy.

A lack of vitamin D can lead to bone deformities such as rickets in children, and bone pain and tenderness as a result of a condition called osteomalacia in adults.

Sources of vitamin D

Most people can make enough vitamin D from being out in the sun with their forearms, hands and lower legs uncovered and without sunscreen, a few days each week. This is best done between 10am and 3pm from early April to the end of September for about 10-15 minutes at a time.

People with dark skin, such as those of African, African-Caribbean or south Asian origin, will need to spend longer in the sun to produce the same amount of vitamin D as someone with lighter skin.

If you are out in the sun, take care to cover up or protect your skin with sunscreen before you turn red or get burnt. Between October and early March we don't get any vitamin D from sunlight.

Vitamin D is also found in a small number of foods. Good food sources are:

- oily fish – such as salmon, sardines, herring and mackerel
- red meat
- liver
- egg yolks
- fortified foods such as most fat spreads and some breakfast cereals