

NUTRITION NUGGET # 12

Question: Should I be taking a Vitamin D supplement?



Answer: You can get vitamin D from the sun and food sources, but ask your doctor to see if you need to take a Vitamin D supplement.

Facts:

- Vitamin D is a nutrient important for health and works with calcium to maintain strong bones.
- You can get vitamin D in three ways: from sunlight (as little as 10 minutes of sun exposure through your skin twice a week), from food sources, and from dietary supplements.
- **Common foods containing Vitamin D: Fortified sources:** milk, soy beverages, margarine, breakfast cereals, orange juice and **Natural sources:** cod liver oil, salmon, herring, mackerel, tuna, eggs, mushrooms (See Appendix 15 of *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010*).



- The amount of vitamin D you need varies with age. The average daily recommendations (RDAs), assuming minimal sun exposure, are:

600 IU for most children and adults

800 IU for adults older than 70 years.

If taking more than 4,000 IU vitamin D per day, the risk of negative effects on health increases.

- People who may need extra Vitamin D from supplements: older adults, breastfed infants, people with dark skin, people with limited sun exposure (homebound), people who are obese or people with conditions that affect fat absorption such as liver disease, cystic fibrosis, & Crohn's disease.
- Extreme lack of vitamin D leads to rickets in children (weak bones & skeletal deformities), osteomalacia in adults (muscular and bone weakness), and increased risk of bone fractures.
- ♦ Your physician may do blood tests to see if you are deficient in vitamin D.

Apply: What are some ways you can get Vitamin D? What foods have vitamin D listed on the food label?

Reference: Dietary Supplements Fact Sheet: Vitamin D, National Institutes of Health at: <http://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/VitaminD-HealthProfessional/>; Vitamin D-Mayo Clinic at: http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/vitamin-d/NS_patient-vitamin-d; Vitamin D (page 41) from *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010*, 7th Edition, December 2010. USDA and US Department of Health and Human Services. Images: Sun at: <http://naturalhealthstechniques.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Sunshine-for-vitamin-d.jpg>; Vitamin D Foods at: <http://kategardnernutrition.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/vitamin-d-foods.jpg>