

What do you know about Vitamin D?

The intent of this article is to provide basic information about Vitamin D. What you know (or don't know) about Vitamin D could be one of the most important pieces of health information you can be aware of! Your own research and questions to your health care practitioner are important to have a better understanding of Vitamin D for your overall health and wellness.

Vitamin D is technically not a "vitamin" but a hormone produced by the body. According to the Vitamin D Council, "current research has implicated vitamin D deficiency as a major factor in the pathology of at least 17 varieties of cancer as well as heart disease, stroke, hypertension, autoimmune diseases, diabetes, depression, chronic pain, osteoarthritis, osteoporosis, muscle weakness, muscle wasting, birth defects, periodontal disease, and more" and "vitamin D's influence on key biological functions vital to one's health and well-being mandates that vitamin D no longer be ignored by the health care industry nor by individuals striving to achieve and maintain a greater state of health".

Also, the Council says, "The high rate of natural production of vitamin D3 cholecalciferol (pronounced koh·luh·kal·sif·uh·rawl) in the skin is the single most important fact every person should know about vitamin D—a fact that has profound implications for the natural human condition."

In studies about everything from cancer to depression and heart disease to bone health, Vitamin D (more specifically inadequate levels of Vitamin D) are found to be contributing factors to a number of illnesses and disease. During this time of year, Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is likely to be improved by increasing levels of Vitamin D.

In addition to certain foods we eat, vitamin D is made available from exposure to sunlight (UVB rays) and supplements. Typically, foods do not contain sufficient amounts of vitamin D are not usually considered a significant source. We can help to insure adequate Vitamin D levels by exposure to (midday) sunlight in the late spring through early fall (as well the use of sun beds in colder months). Caution must be used however never get a sunburn and the amount of uncovered skin makes a difference. Supplements can be taken in various amounts based on an individual's needs and are commonly available. According to some sources, prescription versions may not be more beneficial than over the counter products. New research suggests current recommended daily intake levels (RDA), in any form, are inadequate and new values may still be less than adequate for some people.

The only way to know if you have adequate levels of Vitamin D is to have a 25-hydroxyvitamin D blood test. Though recommendations vary, and each person is different, blood levels somewhere between 50 and 65 (or even 80) ng/mL are considered adequate. Some experts suggest asking about the method of testing used to make sure it complies with current standards used in determining appropriate levels (older test methods may produce an overstated value). Mail in test kits are also available.

Though an "overdose" of Vitamin D is unlikely, blood levels should be checked once a routine of sunlight exposure and supplementation is established. Interestingly, the sun's UVB rays help the body produce Vitamin D and UVA rays destroy excessive levels – a built in "failsafe" system. It's important to remember that evolution has clothed us, created environments and conveniences that reduce our exposure to sunlight and allowed travel away from the equator (with shorter periods of sunlight) than our ancestors experienced!

We hope you found this information was helpful and worthy of further investigation. Don't rule out the importance of Vitamin D for your health and wellness. We can help you evaluate your need for more Vitamin D in your life and have quality supplements available!

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