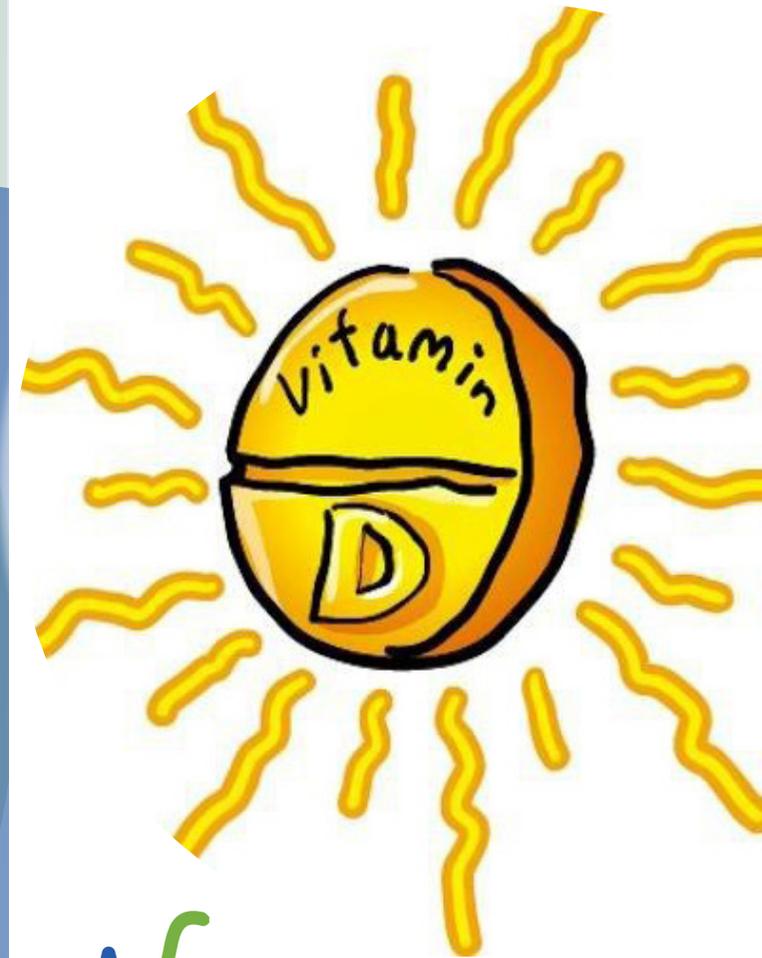


VITAMIN D DEFICIENCY IN ADULTS



How does my GP or hospital doctor decide whether I have vitamin D deficiency or not?

Your doctor will order a blood test to check the amount of vitamin D in your blood. If the test shows that you have lower amounts of vitamin D in your blood than expected, they will decide that you have vitamin D deficiency. Testing for vitamin D is not carried out for everyone. Your doctor will only order a test IF you have symptoms AND risk factors AND if they think that vitamin D deficiency could be affecting your bone health.

What if I am found to be deficient by a test?

You will be prescribed tablets or capsules to correct the deficiency. The dosing will be weekly for 6 or 7 weeks. It is important you complete the course, and will take time for the deficiency to be corrected. After the loading course is finished, you should take a lower 'prevention' or 'maintenance' daily dose alongside diet where possible. As your deficiency has been corrected, and maintenance dose is considered as having a health supplement, It is recommended that you buy this from shops.

Can high doses of vitamin D cause side-effects?

Side effects would be very unusual. However, if side effects were to occur; you should report to your doctor immediately so that blood tests can be arranged to investigate why these symptoms are happening.

If I am being treated for vitamin D deficiency, how often will I need blood tests?

After completing your loading dose, it is not necessary to have a blood test for Vitamin D. It is also not necessary to have a blood test if you are on maintenance dose. You should not worry as vitamin D deficiency is corrected successfully. If you are still having symptoms, the doctor will check if you completed the loading dose course correctly or taking your maintenance doses daily, and may request a further test.

You should have a blood test for calcium after one month of completing the loading dose course to check if your parathyroids are fine.

Do vitamin D tablets/capsules interact with my usual medicines?

There are very few medicines that could interact with vitamin D. Check with your GP or pharmacist.

If I am vegetarian or vegan or if I have a diet based on religious observance (e.g. Halal or Kosher), can I take the high dose vitamin D tablets or capsules?

SunVit® D3 tablets, Hux® D3 capsules and Aciferol® liquid are chosen by doctors based on suitability for dietary requirements. They are free from gelatin. Discuss further with your doctor or pharmacist if you have questions.

This leaflet was produced in collaboration with Barts Health NHS Trust, Newham CCG and Tower Hamlets CCG.

Why do we need Vitamin D?

Vitamin D is important for good health, growth and strong bones. It controls calcium levels in the blood, which is important for the health of our bones.

Where do we get vitamin D from?

Unlike other vitamins, most of our vitamin D does not come from food. Instead, it is made by our bodies when we expose our skin to Ultra violet B rays from sunlight. These rays make the vitamin D for us when our skin is exposed to them. Only a small amount of our vitamin D comes from food. The foods which contain the most vitamin D are:

- Oily fish (tuna, salmon, and mackerel)
- Eggs
- Fortified food like some breakfast cereals and margarine.

What about calcium?

A diet rich in calcium is also important for health; sources of calcium include milk, yogurt and cheese.

What happens if I don't have enough vitamin D?

This is called vitamin D deficiency. Most people with vitamin D deficiency have no symptoms and this is nothing to worry about.

Some people may have suffered bone fractures before, or may be diagnosed with osteoporosis. In some cases, there may be severe pain or muscle weakness. Talk to your GP if you are concerned.

Why do people become deficient in the UK?

In the UK, Ultra Violet B rays from sunlight are only available in sufficient quantities for the skin to produce vitamin D approximately between 11 am to 3pm in the summer months from April to September.

This is not enough for some people to make enough vitamin D, especially in winter. Vitamin D deficiency can be quite common in the UK for this reason.

Who is at risk of vitamin D deficiency?

- People who have darker skin colour
- People who cover a lot of their skin for religious or cultural reasons
- People who are housebound
- Vegans and vegetarians because they do not get vitamin D from fish or eggs
- People taking certain medicines (i.e. medicines for epilepsy or HIV, rifampicin or cholestyramine)
- People who have certain medical conditions (such as Crohn's Disease). Ask your doctor or pharmacist for advice.

How can I avoid becoming deficient?

Aim to go outside for expose to direct sunlight at least 2-3 times each week between 11am and 3pm for around 10-15

minutes at a time.

People with darker skin should expose their skin for 25-30 minutes at a time. Avoid the use of sunscreen for these short times.

Doing this in the UK summer months will ensure you have enough vitamin D stored in your body to last throughout the year. If you can, try to include oily fish, eggs, dairy and fortified foods (fortified cereals, margarine for example) in your diet.

Can I buy vitamin D supplements?

If you are 65+ years, not exposed to too much sun and in the at-risk groups, or if you are a pregnant or breast-feeding woman, you should consider taking a daily multivitamin or vitamin D tablet or capsule that contains a small vitamin D dose of 10 micrograms (400 units).

These can be bought cheaply from any pharmacy or health food shop. If you are pregnant or breastfeeding you may be eligible for vitamins via the Healthy Start Scheme – see www.healthystart.nhs.uk or doctor/pharmacist.

If you are not in one of the above groups, you should aim to get your vitamin D from natural sources but if you choose to buy a low-dose (10 micrograms, 400 units) vitamin D supplement – it should be safe to do so.