

We often think of vitamins as something we need to get from our diet, but did you know that our bodies can produce vitamins too? One vitamin that we can produce is vitamin D, also known as the sunshine vitamin. Let's take a closer look at vitamin D and why it's so important.

What is Vitamin D?

Vitamin D is an essential micronutrient [and a hormone] that is important for maintaining longevity. It's a fat-soluble vitamin, which means it's absorbed best when consumed with some fat. Our bodies can make Vitamin D when our skin is exposed to sunlight, however, it's important not to get too much sun exposure because this can increase your risk of skin cancer.

Why do I need Vitamin D?

Vitamin D is important for many functions in our bodies. It helps us absorb calcium, which is necessary for bone health. It also plays a role in cell growth and immune function. Because of all of the different roles it plays in the body, vitamin D is essential for overall health. Deficiencies have been linked to an increased risk of bone fractures, osteoporosis, diabetes, some types of cancer, and even heart disease. A lack of vitamin D can lead to bone deformities such as rickets in children and osteoporosis in adults.

How much Vitamin D do I need?

The amount of vitamin D that you need depends on several factors, including age, skin tone, and sun exposure. The best way to determine how much vitamin D you need and if you need a supplement is to talk to your doctor or healthcare provider. The Institute of Medicine (IOM) recommends the following daily intake of vitamin D:

- 400 IU (10 mcg) for infants up to 6 months old
- 600 IU (15 mcg) for children 6 months to 1 year old
- 600 IU (15 mcg) for adults 1-70 years old
- 800 IU (20 mcg) for adults over 70 years old

Pregnant and breastfeeding women may need more vitamin D than other adults. Talk to your doctor about how much you need.



What foods have Vitamin D?

There aren't many foods that naturally contain high levels of Vitamin D, so it can be difficult to get enough of this nutrient from diet alone. However, there are a few food items that are good sources:

FISH



Fish such as salmon, tuna, mackerel, and sardines are some of the best sources of vitamin D. Due to their high fat content, these fish also tend to contain large amounts of omega-3 fatty acids, which are beneficial for heart health. For best results, aim to eat at least two servings of fish per week.

FORTIFIED DAIRY PRODUCTS



Milk, cheese, and yogurt all contain small amounts of vitamin D. These products are also good sources of calcium, which helps build strong bones. Read nutrition labels to identify if a product is fortified with Vitamin D.

EGGS



Just like dairy products, eggs yolks contain small amounts of Vitamin D, which supports calcium absorption and promotes strong bones and teeth. Pasture-raised eggs typically contain significantly more vitamin D than conventionally raised eggs.

MUSHROOMS [UV EXPOSED]



Mushrooms are one of the only plant sources of vitamin D. However, not all mushrooms contain this nutrient; only mushrooms that have been exposed to ultraviolet (UV) light have significant levels of vitamin D2.

FORTIFIED CEREALS



Many breakfast cereals are fortified with vitamins and minerals, including vitamin D3. However, it's important to check the label before purchasing as not all cereals are fortified with this micronutrient.