

Vitamin D advice during coronavirus

Why do I need Vitamin D?

Vitamin D helps to keep bones, teeth and muscles healthy. It also plays an important role in the immune system, which helps our body fight infection.

Our body makes vitamin D from direct sunlight on our skin when we are outdoors. Ideally, you should be getting 10 to 15 minutes of unprotected sun exposure every day. This should be without sunscreen, because once sunscreen is applied to the skin, the body no longer makes vitamin D. If you plan to stay in the sun for longer periods, it is important to use sun protection, such as sunscreen and a hat, to prevent skin cancer.

We also get small amounts of vitamin D from eating a small range of foods, including oily fish – salmon, mackerel, herring and sardines – red meats and eggs.



Risk of Vitamin D deficiency

During COVID-19, we are being advised to stay at home as much as possible which means being indoors for much of the day. This could mean that you might not be getting enough vitamin D from exposure to the sun.

The risk of vitamin D deficiency is higher among certain groups of people, including:

- Pregnant and breastfeeding women
- Infants and young children under 5
- People who have darker skin, particularly people of African, South Asian or African-Caribbean origin
- Older people aged 65 and over
- People who usually cover their skin when outside
- People who are indoors all the time

Advice

While the 'stay-at-home' lockdown measures are in place, consider taking a daily supplement of vitamin D. If you already take multivitamins, you should check the label to see if they contain vitamin D. The recommended dosage is 10 micrograms or 400 International Units (IU). Do not buy more vitamin D than you need. Taking too many vitamin D supplements can be bad for your health.

Vitamin D supplements are available at most pharmacies and supermarkets. If you are pregnant or have a child under 4 years old, you may be eligible for vitamins via the Healthy Start Scheme.

If you are unsure about whether or not take a Vitamin D supplement, speak to your pharmacist or doctor.

For further information, visit the following NHS webpages

Vitamin D: <https://bit.ly/2ARBr4B>

Latest information and advice about coronavirus (COVID-19):

<https://bit.ly/3ha29pG>

Advice for people at higher risk from coronavirus:

<https://bit.ly/3cG6ZHK>

Healthy Start Scheme: www.healthystart.nhs.uk