

Vitamin D:

What You Need to Know About the "Sunshine" Vitamin

Eating a wide range of nutrient-rich foods is important for good health. One nutrient receiving a lot of attention is vitamin D. New research and updated national recommendations suggest that children and adults eat more vitamin D-rich foods.

Why do we need vitamin D?

- Vitamin D helps your body absorb calcium for good **bone health**.
- Kids need vitamin D to help prevent **rickets**, a childhood bone disease resulting in bowed legs.
- Low vitamin D intakes can also lead to weak bones in adults, called **osteomalacia**.
- Vitamin D may help reduce risk of **cancers** such as breast, colon and prostate.
- Vitamin D may also help prevent **multiple sclerosis** and **rheumatoid arthritis**.
- New research suggests that vitamin D may boost the **immune system** and help control our blood sugar levels—which may help prevent **diabetes**.

Where do we get vitamin D?

Good food sources of vitamin D include fortified milk and yogurt and fatty fish such as salmon, tuna and sardines. Other foods such as orange juice, margarine and breakfast cereals may be fortified with vitamin D. The chart below lists good food sources of vitamin D.

Vitamin D is often referred to as the "sunshine" vitamin because our bodies can make it when we are out in the sun. About 5 – 30 minutes of sun twice a week on our face, hands and arms—without sunscreen—is enough to meet our needs. And it is stored in our body for the days and weeks that we do not get enough sun. Although most of us get enough vitamin D from food and sun exposure, some people may not be able to: those who live in northern states, are not outside often, are older or have dark skin.

Vitamin D (IU)	
Salmon, cooked (3.5 ounces)	360
Sardines, canned (1.75 ounces)	250
Tuna, canned (3 ounces)	200
Milk (1 cup)	100
Vitamin D-fortified orange juice (1 cup)	100
Soy beverage (1 cup)	100
Margarine, fortified (1 tablespoon)	60
Breakfast cereal, fortified (1 serving)	40
Egg (1 whole)	20

How much do we need?

The following recommendations were set by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) to ensure good bone health:

Vitamin D (IU)	
Children and adults up to 70 years	600
Adults older than 70	800

The IOM encourages people to get their vitamin D from foods rather than supplements. Very high doses of vitamin D (above 10,000 IU per day) can cause kidney and tissue damage and other harmful health effects. If you take supplements, do not take more than 2,000 IU/day unless directed by your doctor.

Simple ways to boost your intake:

- Aim for 3 cups of vitamin D-fortified milk a day.
- Use milk instead of water in making hot chocolate, soups and sauces.
- Choose vitamin D-fortified yogurts, cheese and orange juice whenever possible.
- Check labels and choose breakfast cereals that are fortified with vitamin D.
- Include tuna on a regular basis, in sandwiches, casseroles or salads
- Grill or bake salmon for a vitamin D-rich meal, once a week if possible.



An easy way to get your recommended vitamin D and other important nutrients is to base your eating pattern on nutrient-rich choices from all five food groups: low-fat milk and dairy foods; lean meats, beans and nuts; whole and enriched grains; fruits and vegetables.

Visit www.mealsmatter.org to find recipes using vitamin D-rich foods.



For questions or comments please contact us at: info@dairycouncilofca.org