

WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH VITAMIN D?

Vitamin D is a fat-soluble vitamin but acts more like a hormone in your body, because your body can manufacture it.

In the last five years there has been a lot of talk in the medical world about Vitamin D. It has been found that approximately 75% of Americans are deficient. This issue is cause for concern, as low Vitamin D levels (cholecalciferol or Vitamin D3) are related to a number of health conditions - osteoporosis, insulin resistance and diabetes, cardiovascular disease, metabolic syndrome, depression, chronic pain and multiple sclerosis, menstrual migraines, infertility and breast cancer.

TESTING

You should absolutely have your vitamin D levels tested by your doctor. Based on new research, your vitamin D levels should be between 50-70 ng/mL, and you should ensure that your vitamin A and vitamin K2 levels are adequate. This is because vitamins A and K2 prevent against vitamin D toxicity. If your levels are low, you should start supplementing and then re-test 3 months later.

If your levels are low, you should start supplementing and then re-test 3 months later. Per the Vitamin D Council, you should take 1000IU per 25lbs of body weight per day. For instance, if you weigh 125lbs, that's 5000IU/day. If your levels are over 50 then I recommend 2000IU a day as a maintenance dosage. You may need much more to maintain blood levels of 50-70ng/mL but you should talk to your doctor about this before beginning a regimen.

VITAMIN D FROM SUNLIGHT

Natural sunlight is as much a nutrient as food and water. The best source for natural Vitamin D is sunlight when possible. The body stores significant reserves of vitamin D in the liver, spleen, bones, and brain, which is helpful in countries where there is little sun in the winter. These stores can then be used slowly during the darker months. However, many people in these areas need foods and supplementation in addition to sunlight.

You should expose your face, arms and legs to the sun, three or more times a week, for 10-20 minutes, depending on your skin, the season, and the distance from the Equator. The best time of day for this is 9am-4pm in the winter, and 8am-5pm in the summer.

Most importantly, except for your face, this exposure to the sun should be without sunscreen, as sunscreen interferes with the production of Vitamin D. Remember this: **A sunscreen with SPF 8 gives you only 5% of your normal Vitamin D production; any SPF higher than that insures you get NONE.** The liberal use of sunblock is partly to blame for the current vitamin D deficiency epidemic, in my opinion.

VITAMIN D FROM FOOD

Vitamin D3 in foods is found mostly in fish oils. It can also be made synthetically by ultraviolet light irradiation of a derivative of cholesterol. Vitamin D2 is a different synthetic form, known as ergocalciferol and it is typically found in Vitamin D fortified foods like milk.

1. Consume wild ocean fatty fish such as herring and salmon. 2-3 servings/week should be sufficient.
2. There are vitamin D precursors in plant foods and leafy greens, known as ergosterols; parsley is a particularly rich source. So are mushrooms, especially Shitake and Maitake mushrooms. Placing mushrooms in the sun for 30 minutes dramatically increases their vitamin D levels too.
3. Cod Liver Oil is the classic Vitamin D source that has been used for generations in Northern Europe, where there is little sun. It also contains natural vitamin A - these two vitamins work synergistically.

Vitamin D from food sources is fat-soluble which means it is absorbed through the intestines in the company of essential fatty acids. So eat plenty of good quality healthful fats to maintain adequate levels.

NOTE: This means that a low fat diet could be damaging to your hormonal health, your fertility and your bones!