

## How is vitamin D tested?

Your doctor may request a blood test to check your vitamin D level. If the test shows that you are vitamin D deficient you may be prescribed high dose vitamin D to treat the deficiency. Vitamin D testing is not requested for everyone. Your doctor will only order a test if you are at high risk of vitamin D deficiency and have symptoms.

## Do I need a supplement?

Adults who are at risk of vitamin D deficiency or are not able to get sufficient vitamin D from exposure to sunlight and diet should consider taking a supplement. Vitamin D alone or multivitamins containing the recommended dose of vitamin D (approximately 400–800 units or 10-20 micrograms per day) can be bought at a low cost from most pharmacies or health food shops.

Pregnant women should take a supplement containing 400 units (10 micrograms) of vitamin D per day.

It is recommended that all children aged 6 months to 5 years have a daily vitamin D supplement. However infants who are fed infant formula do not need supplements until they are receiving less than 500ml of formula per day, as these products are fortified with vitamin D.

Preparations such as Dalivit and Abidec can be bought from most pharmacies. For more information please speak to your GP, pharmacist or health visitor.

HEALTHY  
START

## Healthy Start vitamins in Solihull

Healthy Start women's tablets have Folic acid and vitamins C and D and are available free to all pregnant and breastfeeding women.



Healthy Start children's drops contain vitamin A, C and D and are available free to eligible low income families on the healthy start scheme for children aged 6 months to 4 years.

Healthy start vitamins are available at most clinics and children's center's. For more information visit: <http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/>



NHS

Solihull  
Clinical Commissioning Group

# Vitamin D

What is it and who needs it?

## What is vitamin D?

Vitamin D (sometimes called colecalciferol or ergocalciferol) is important for good health, growth and ensuring bones and muscles are healthy and strong.

## Where do I get vitamin D from?

Sunlight is the main source of vitamin D. About 90% of what you need is made by your bodies when your skin is exposed to ultraviolet B rays from sunlight. Ensuring that you enjoy the sun safely and take care not to burn can provide the benefits of vitamin D. Around 10% of vitamin D can be obtained from food.

Food sources of vitamin D are particularly important during winter and for people at risk of having a low vitamin D.

- Oily Fish such as salmon, sardines, fresh tuna, mackerel, trout are the best food source of vitamin D.
- Pregnant or breastfeeding women should not have more than two portions of oily fish per week.
- Foods such as eggs, mushrooms and red meat contain a small amount of vitamin D.
- Some foods such as breakfast cereals, margarine and yogurt are fortified with vitamin D.



## Who is at risk of vitamin D deficiency?



- Older people aged 65 years and over.
- Children under the age of 5 years.
- Pregnant or breastfeeding women.
- People who have a darker skin colour.
- People that cover up a lot of their body when outside (wear niqab or burqa).
- People that spend most of their time indoors (e.g. hospital, housebound, care homes).
- People that only eat certain food groups as part of their diet (e.g. vegan).
- People who have certain medical conditions (e.g. Crohn's disease, renal disease, liver disease).
- People taking certain medication (e.g. medicines for epilepsy, HIV or cholestyramine)

## What if I have low vitamin D?

This is called vitamin D deficiency. Most people with vitamin D deficiency have no symptoms and some have harmless symptoms such as general ache. Very severe cases have been associated with pain or muscle weakness.

## What causes vitamin D deficiency?

The peak time for the vitamin D production from ultraviolet sunlight in the UK is between 11am and 3pm between April and mid October. This may not be enough for some people to produce sufficient vitamin D.



## How can I increase my vitamin D?

From April to mid October expose your bare skin (face, arms, hands) to direct sunlight a few days each week. This is best done between 11am and 3pm for about 10-15 minutes at a time. People with darker skin will need to spend longer in the sun to produce the same amount of vitamin D. This will ensure that you have enough vitamin D stored in the body to last throughout the year. Food sources of vitamin D should also be included in your diet.