



## Vitamin D – Sunlight or Supplementation?

### What is Vitamin D?

Vitamin D is a fat-soluble nutrient that plays a key role in almost all of our physiological functions. As an immune system regulator, vitamin D is absolutely vital to vibrant health. Although there are many forms of vitamin D, the two most common types are vitamin D<sub>3</sub> and vitamin D<sub>2</sub>.

Vitamin D aids in the prevention of:

- osteoporosis
- many types of cancer
- depression
- diabetes and obesity

Vitamin D is the most undervalued nutrient in the world, since most people assume they are getting enough from the sun.

Although sunlight is one source of vitamin D, there are very few individuals who get enough exposure to reap the benefits adequate levels of vitamin D provide. In addition, excessive time in the sun can increase the risk of skin cancer.

### How Can We Get Vitamin D?



While experts agree that Vitamin D is crucial, there is some controversy over the best way to get it. While some say exposure to the sun is enough, others encourage a supplement regimen.

Exposing your body to sunlight is the simplest way to get vitamin D. Those with fair skin require about 45 minutes of exposure, while those with darker skin may require up to three hours a week to maintain sufficient levels.

Keep in mind that weather conditions affect proper exposure, so be on the lookout for clouds and smog!

If you're looking to get vitamin D from food, include fatty fish like salmon, tuna, mackerel, herring, and sardines in your diet. Cod liver oil boasts high vitamin D levels, but also contains a lot of vitamin A, which may be toxic in large amounts.

Other foods packed with vitamin D are eggs, fortified milk, select yogurt brands, and cheese products.

In Northern areas with limited sunlight, supplementation is a common way to get enough vitamin D. High quality multivitamins contain approximately 50 – 1,000 IU (International Units) of vitamin D in each capsule or tablet. If you are considering supplements, check in with your primary care physician before starting a regimen.



1. Estimated equivalency of vitamin D production from natural sun exposure versus oral vitamin D supplementation across seasons at two US latitudes. *J Am Acad Dermatol.* 2010 Jun; 62(6):929.e1-9.
2. Vitamin D. Office of Dietary Supplements, NIH.
3. Vitamin D. Mayo Clinic.