



The Sunshine Vitamin

Summer is here and the sun is shining, which is one of the best ways to get your vitamin D. But what if we do not get enough sunlight throughout the year? Is a vitamin D supplement necessary?



What the studies say:

Vitamin D may help to prevent a number of diseases such as heart disease and diabetes. It also has a range of potential anti-cancer actions. But much of the information on vitamin D comes from studies that cannot be reproduced for the general public. Currently, a handful of trials are happening, in and outside of the U.S., which will likely tell us if supplementation is protective for our health.



What we already know:

Vitamin D helps to keep our bones and teeth healthy, and is associated with other aspects of health. According to the new Dietary Guidelines, we should get most of our vitamin D from foods. Fortified foods and dietary supplements may be helpful when we fall short of recommendations. Vitamin D is also called the sunshine vitamin because our bodies can make it when we are exposed to sun. Just 10-15 minutes per day is usually enough. Good food sources of vitamin D are fatty fish such as salmon, tuna and sardines, as well as milk fortified with vitamin D. You can even find mushrooms that have been exposed to light to increase the amount of vitamin D they contain.



Bottom Line:

Getting enough vitamin D is important to our overall health, but there can also be risks with getting too much. Before you reach for a supplement, look at how much time you spend in the sun and how many foods with vitamin D you choose. If you think you may not be getting enough vitamin D, talk to your health care provider at your next visit.

REFERENCES:

1. Neale RD, Armstrong C, Baxter B et al. The D-Health Trial: A randomized trial of vitamin D for prevention of mortality and cancer. 10 April 2016. Contemporary Clinical Trials, doi: 10.1016/j.cct.2016.04.005
2. National Institutes of Health: Office of Dietary Supplements. Vitamin D Fact Sheet for Health Professionals. <https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/VitaminD-HealthProfessional/#h3>. Updated February 11, 2016. Visited April 14, 2016.

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