

What about calcium?

In addition to a daily 1000 units vitamin D₃ supplement, getting enough calcium can help reduce the risk of hip and non-spinal fractures, especially for older adults living in long term care facilities. Calcium can also help prevent and treat osteoporosis, which is another concern for older adults, especially females.

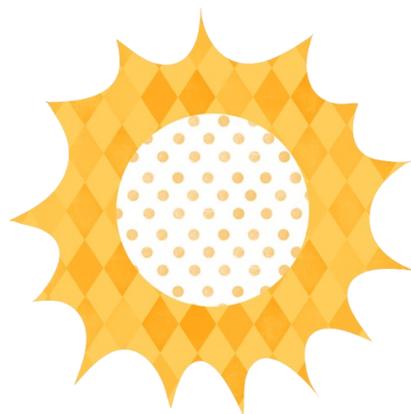
Health Canada and Osteoporosis Canada recommend that all adults 19 years and older receive 1000-1200 mg of calcium each day. Calcium can be found in a variety of foods. Below is a chart of the calcium content of some common foods:

Food	Serving Size	Amount of Calcium (mg)
Homo, 2%, 1%, skim milk	250 mL (1 cup)	300
Yogurt	175 mL (3/4 cup)	215-315
Cheddar or Mozzarella	50 g (1 1/2 oz)	400-500
Canned salmon, with bones	75 g (2 1/2 oz)	175-200

*Values are approximate

For some people, especially older adults, it may be hard to meet the recommended amounts of calcium each day. It is recommended that older adults receive a 500 mg supplement of calcium daily if they are not meeting requirements.

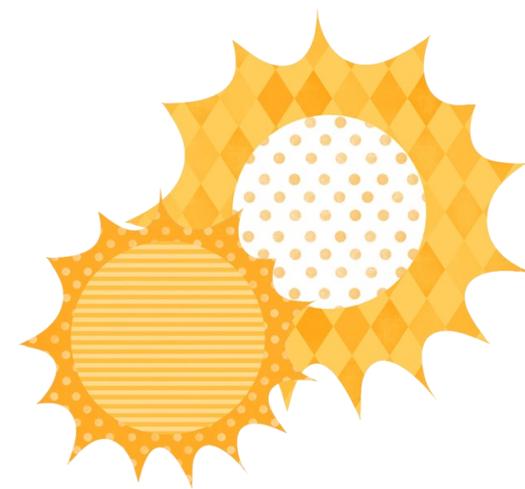
Are you and your family members getting enough vitamin D?



If you have further questions about vitamin D, feel free to contact the doctor, pharmacist, or dietitian in your community.



Vitamin D & You!



Information on the health benefits of vitamin D

What is vitamin D?

The major function of vitamin D is to help our bodies absorb calcium and phosphorus to build and maintain strong bones and teeth. Vitamin D is a fat-soluble vitamin which means extra vitamin D can be stored in our bodies.



How much vitamin D do I need?

The chart below shows the recommendations for total vitamin D intake for adults made by Health Canada. Intake levels between the 'Intake/Day' and the 'Tolerable Upper Intake Level' are all safe levels for vitamin D. Making sure that we get enough vitamin D is important because adequate levels of vitamin D are necessary for normal bone growth and maintenance as well as regulation of muscle movement and immune function.

Age in Years	Intake/Day	Tolerable Upper Intake Level
19-50	600 units	4000 units
51-70	600 units	4000 units
71+	800 units	4000 units
Pregnant and Breastfeeding Women 19+	600 units	4000 units

Sun Country Health Region physicians recommend that all adults take a vitamin D₃ supplement of 1000 units each day to ensure adequate intake for optimal health.

What can happen if I don't get enough vitamin D?

Not getting enough vitamin D can lead to a deficiency that can cause weak and brittle bones. A vitamin D deficiency causes softening of the bones and this is called 'osteomalacia' in adults. For adults, a vitamin D deficiency can also lead to deterioration of bone tissue which is known as 'osteoporosis'. Low vitamin D levels can also lead to reduced muscle strength and for older adults, this can increase the risk of falls.

Can I get too much vitamin D?

Vitamin D is fat soluble, so that means that our bodies store vitamin D in our fat tissue. By consistently taking in more vitamin D than what is recommended, there can be negative effects on our bodies. Too much vitamin D can cause a variety of symptoms including loss of appetite, unintended weight loss, the frequent need to urinate, and irregular heart beats. Too much vitamin D can also cause our bodies to absorb too much calcium resulting in a hardening of our soft tissues (heart, blood vessels, and kidneys).

To avoid vitamin D toxicity, follow your doctor's advice on how much vitamin D you should be getting from supplements.

Vitamin D and Falls

Vitamin D has been shown to improve muscle function and help to retain muscle strength. This is an important factor in preventing falls in older adults. Older adults are at increased risk of having low levels of vitamin D because, as we age, our bodies are less efficient at producing and using vitamin D that comes from the sun's rays. It is important that older adults get their supplement of 1000 units of vitamin D₃ each day to keep their vitamin D stores adequate.

Where can I get vitamin D?

Sunlight Exposure

Our skin can make vitamin D with sunlight exposure, making the sun a source of vitamin D for us. For this reason, vitamin D is often called the 'sunshine vitamin'. However, in Canada, we are unable to make enough vitamin D through our skin during most of autumn, winter, and spring. In addition, darker skin tones, sunscreen, and clothing that covers most of our body decreases our ability to make vitamin D. Also, as we age, our skin isn't able to make vitamin D as efficiently.

Food

Vitamin D is not found naturally in many foods. Foods that naturally contain vitamin D include fatty ocean fish (i.e. herring, salmon, mackerel, sardines, etc.), liver and egg yolks. In Canada, food companies are required to fortify our milk and margarine with vitamin D. Other foods such as yogurt and orange juice are sometimes fortified with vitamin D, but it is not required.

Supplements

Getting enough vitamin D through sunlight exposure and food alone can be quite challenging, especially in the Canadian climate. Therefore, vitamin D supplements can help us get enough vitamin D each day. A daily vitamin D₃ supplement of 1000 units is a safe and commonly available dose found at the pharmacy that will help raise and maintain levels of vitamin D. Vitamin D₃ supplements are most easily used by our bodies and come in tablet, chewable and liquid forms.