



Vitamin D

For patients who need extra vitamin D in their diet.

Vitamin D is a vitamin found naturally in some foods and is added to other foods. Vitamin D is also made by the body when skin is directly exposed to the sun. In the Pacific Northwest this is mainly in the summer months.

Why is vitamin D important?

Vitamin D helps bodies absorb calcium to build strong bones. It is also needed for a healthy immune system and to reduce inflammation. Recent studies show that vitamin D may help prevent diseases such as diabetes and some cancers.

Sources of vitamin D

Vitamin D is found naturally in only a few foods. These include fatty fish (salmon, tuna, mackerel, swordfish, catfish), cod liver oil, beef liver and egg yolks. Foods that have Vitamin D added (fortified) include cow's milk, infant formula, and some brands of yogurt, soy milk, cereals and orange juices. Check the nutrition labels. Exposure to sunlight helps us meet some of our needs; yet it is often not enough. Vitamin D is also found in supplements.

Calcium and vitamin D work together

Taking vitamin D without enough calcium can be harmful to your bones. It is important your child gets enough calcium from food or supplements. Refer to the table below. Ask your doctor or dietitian if your child needs a calcium supplement in addition to vitamin D.

How much vitamin D and calcium does my child need?

How much children need daily from food and/or supplements:

Age	Vitamin D	Calcium
0 to 6 months	400 IU*	200 mg
6 to 12 months	400 IU	260 mg
1 to 3 years	600 IU	700 mg
4 to 8 years	600 IU	1000 mg
9 to 18 years	600 IU	1300 mg
19 to 50 years	600 IU	1000 mg

*Vitamin D is measured in IU's-International Units

Does my child need a vitamin D supplement?

All breastfed infants and formula fed infants who drink less than 1 liter (33 ounces) of formula per day need a vitamin D supplement of 400 IU/day.

If your child has a low vitamin D blood level (<30 nanograms/mL), they will need a supplement to restore their vitamin D levels. The amount of supplement depends on your child's age and vitamin D blood level.

To Learn More

- Your child's dietitian:

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- Nutrition
206-987-4758
 - Ask your child's
healthcare provider
 - www.seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your child's nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

Use vitamin D only if recommended by your healthcare provider. Check with your healthcare provider first before giving any type of vitamin to your child. In cases of low vitamin D levels, the amount of vitamin D your child needs may be higher.

Your child's vitamin D level should be rechecked 2 to 3 months after starting a supplement for a low vitamin D level. When your child's vitamin D levels are restored to normal, talk with your healthcare provider about what a good maintenance dose should be for your child. After a low vitamin D level has been restored, most people need 800 IU per day for maintenance.

What kind of vitamin D supplements are there?

Vitamin D is found in 2 different forms: D2 (ergocalciferol) and D3 (cholecalciferol). Vitamin D3 is the preferred type because it is better absorbed. It is also more readily available over the counter. Vitamin D supplements are available as capsules, pills, chewables or liquids. It is also in multivitamins and some calcium supplements.

Where can I purchase a vitamin D supplement?

Most grocery stores or pharmacies have over-the-counter vitamin D supplements. If you want a chewable or liquid supplement, you may find better options and prices online*:

- A1 Supplements: www.a1supplements.com
- Carlson Nutritional Supplements: www.carlsonlabs.com
- Emerson Ecologics: www.emersonecologics.com
- Puritan's Pride: www.puritan.com
- Wellesse: www.wellesse.com

The nutrition supplement industry is unregulated so the quality of supplements can vary. Supplements that are labeled "USP Verified" have undergone testing and may be higher quality products. ConsumerLab.com also conducts independent testing. Your doctor may give you a vitamin D prescription that you can fill at a pharmacy.

Where can I find more information about vitamin D?

- Dietary Supplement Fact Sheet: Vitamin D
ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/VitaminD-QuickFacts/
- Spanish version: ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/VitaminD-DatosEnEspagnol/
- Calcium, Why Do I Need It? Seattle Children's Hospital
www.seattlechildrens.org/pdf/PE1211.pdf

*Listing does not imply endorsement.

Seattle Children's offers interpreter services for Deaf, hard of hearing or non-English speaking patients, family members and legal representatives free of charge. Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call the Family Resource Center at 206-987-2201.

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider.

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