

Vitamin D, the Sunshine Vitamin

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Vitamin D is referred to as the sunshine vitamin because your body produces it naturally when your skin absorbs direct sunlight. Just 30 minutes per day of direct sunlight is enough to achieve this. Even through a window! I remember (30 years ago now) my pediatrician advising me to put my son's crib (or napping area) in front of a window to catch the healthy rays of sunshine. This is especially important for babies born in the winter when getting them outside with their skin exposed is more difficult if not dangerous. Especially if you experience the frigid climates we do here in Canada.

Benefits

- creates strong bones and teeth
- prevents depression by regulating moods, and helps with anxiety
- reduces the risk of heart disease, MS, and some forms of cancer
- boosts immune function, prevents colds and influenza
- boosts weight loss goals by suppressing appetite

Deficiency Symptoms

- depression and/or anxiety, mood swings
- hip, leg or pelvic stress fractures
- muscle pain or weakness
- bone pain and/or osteoporosis
- fatigue, general malaise

Food Sources of Natural Vitamin D

- salmon

- egg yolks
- shrimp
- sardines

Fortified Food Sources of Vitamin D

Since there are very few foods that naturally contain Vitamin D, fortified products like milk, cereals, yogurt and orange juice are readily available to boost your daily dosage.

Supplements

A thirty minute break for [sunshine](#) is easier said than done for many of us with busy lives. Thirty minutes outside may just not be a luxury your daily schedule permits. Another obstacle is the fact that the darker your skin tone is, the less your skin can absorb the beneficial effects of the sunshine. If either impediment applies to you, try the Vitamin D drops. You add them to any liquid and drink in the (effects of) sunshine. Not quite the same experience, but apparently they work.

If you do opt for the drops of Vitamin D, choose wisely and ingest only as directed. Keep in mind that animal-based Vitamin D3 is more potent than plant-based D2 version. Both can be toxic if over indulged due to resulting high levels of calcium in the bloodstream. That's because vitamin D increases calcium adsorption from the foods you eat. Signs of toxicity (too much calcium AKA hypercalcemia) may include nausea, stomach pain, diarrhea, constipation, poor appetite, fatigue and confusion.

In Conclusion

Have you noticed how people get sick and depressed more often during the winter months, especially in countries with cold temperatures? That's because people stay indoors more when it's miserably cold, so their skin absorbs less (or absolutely no) immunity and mood boosting Vitamin D. Like hibernating

bears, we get cranky and miserable without sunshine.

Just over a [bad cold](#) myself, when I think (way) back to the few weeks prior to its onset, I did spend less time outdoors. My excuses included that fact that it was either too cold or too slippery out. It didn't help that I was busy with a writing project, something I can do in my cozy, warm pjs. Many days I didn't want to disturb my writing progress by taking the time to bundle up and get outdoors.

Well, I paid for (and learned from) that error in time management (and laziness).

Vitamin D deficiency is extremely common around the world. The benefits of adding it to your daily routine far outweigh the risks, which are not even an issue when correct doses of supplements are taken.

The good news is you cannot overdose on the natural vitamin D your body makes from exposure to sunshine! Credit for the feature (top of page) picture goes to my sister [Vickie](#), living in sunshine on the gulf coast beaches of Texas.



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