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Foods With Vitamin D

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An essential nutrient, vitamin D helps the body maintain the calcium and phosphorus levels needed for strong teeth and bones and to prevent osteoporosis. It also helps keep the immune system strong and enhances muscle and nerve function. Studies show vitamin D can also play a role in preventing high blood pressure; breast, prostate and colon cancer; multiple sclerosis; type 1 diabetes; and several autoimmune diseases.

Food Sources

Although most of the vitamins the body needs can be gotten from a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, that's not the case with D. Very few [foods](#) contain D naturally. Most D-rich foods have been scientifically fortified. The best sources include cod liver oil, salmon, mackerel, tuna, sardines, fortified milk, fortified margarine, egg yolk, beef liver, fortified cheese and fortified breakfast cereals.

Additional Sources

Vitamin D is often called the "sunlight vitamin" because skin exposed to the sun's ultraviolet rays can produce D. The amount depends on location, skin pigment and age, among other factors. Those with dark skin, or who live in northern latitudes, make less than others. Sunscreen use can also play a role.

Daily Requirement

The amount of vitamin D a person needs varies by age. Minimum daily doses recommended by the U.S. Food and Drug

Administration are:

200 International Units (IUs) up until age 50

400 IUs for those 51 to 70 (Most multi-vitamins provide this.)

600 IUs for those 71 and older

Warning

Although the body can naturally eliminate any extra vitamin D made from sunlight, D absorbed from supplements can build up---sometimes to toxic levels. Getting more than 1,000 IUs of D a day can lead to problems that include excessive urination, high blood pressure, kidney stones, kidney damage and reduced heart and lung function.

Added Insight

Vitamin D deficiencies are commonly seen in women, children and the elderly. If you're in one of these populations, talk with your doctor.

Resources

- [National Institutes of Health](#)
- [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#)