



# VITAMIN D

## What Does Vitamin D Do?

Vitamin D is important to bone health. It helps your body absorb calcium, which helps build healthy bones. Vitamin D is also needed for nerves to signal other parts of the body, and it plays a role in helping the immune system fight infections. It may also play a role in helping to protect against certain diseases, but more research is needed at this time.

## How Do You Get Vitamin D?

Vitamin D is found naturally in fish oil, fatty fish, organ meats, and eggs. However, people typically get most of their vitamin D from foods that are fortified with the vitamin, such as milk and cereal.

When the skin is exposed to sunlight, your body can also make vitamin D, but this may not be enough to meet your body's needs. Wearing sunscreen is recommended to protect your skin from harmful UV rays, but it also limits the vitamin D your body can produce from the sun.

## How Much Vitamin D Do You Need?

Average daily recommended amounts are listed below in micrograms (mcg) and International Units (IU). These amounts assume that a person is getting little sun exposure.

- ▶ 1- to 70-year-olds: 15 mcg (600 IU) vitamin D per day (including women who are pregnant or breastfeeding)
- ▶ 70-years-old and older: 20 mcg (800 IU) vitamin D per day

People who take certain medications (such as corticosteroids and some medications for lowering cholesterol, preventing seizures, or helping with weight loss) may need more vitamin D.

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### TIPS FOR GETTING MORE VITAMIN D

Have several servings of fat-free (skim) or low-fat (2%) milk every day.

- ▶ All types of milk—fat-free (skim), low fat (1%), reduced-fat (2%), and whole milk—are fortified with Vitamin D.
- ▶ The words *Vitamin D* often appear in large letters on whole milk containers. However, whole milk does not have more vitamin D than other types of milk.

If you drink soy milk, rice milk, or another nondairy milk, check the food label. Choose types fortified with vitamin D.

Look for products (such as some cereals and 100% fruit juices) that are fortified with calcium and vitamin D.

Aim to eat fish 2 times a week.

Choose yogurt and other dairy foods fortified with vitamin D.

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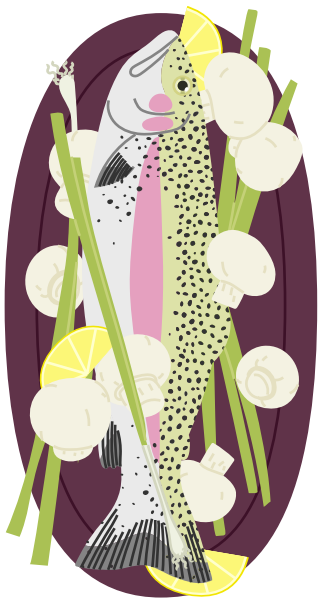


## How Much Vitamin D Is Too Much?

Too much vitamin D can lead to high calcium levels in the blood. This increases the risk of kidney stones and may weaken bones and muscles.

To avoid these health problems, most adults should not get more than 100 mcg (4,000 IU) of vitamin D per day from food and supplements. For children 4 to 8 years old, the daily amount of vitamin D should not exceed 75 mcg (3,000 IU), and no more than 63 mcg (2,500 IU) per day for younger children, 1 to 3 years of age.

A higher amount of vitamin D may be needed to treat a vitamin D deficiency. Be sure to follow the recommendations provided by your health-care provider.



## Which Foods Have Vitamin D?

Food	Micrograms (mcg) per Serving	IUs per Serving
Cod liver oil, 1 tablespoon	34.0	1,360
Trout (rainbow), farmed, cooked, 3 ounces	16.2	645
Salmon (sockeye), cooked, 3 ounces	14.2	570
Mushrooms, white, raw, exposed to UV light, ½ cup sliced	9.2	366
Milk, reduced-fat (2%), vitamin D fortified, 1 cup	2.9	120
Sardines (Atlantic), canned in oil, drained, 2 sardines	1.2	46
Soy, almond, and oat milks, vitamin D fortified, various brands, 1 cup	2.5–3.6	100–144
Ready-to-eat cereal, fortified with 10% of the Daily Value for vitamin D, 1 serving	2.0	80
Egg, 1 large, scrambled (vitamin D is in the yolk)	1.1	44
Liver, beef, braised, 3 ounces	1.0	42
Tuna fish (light), canned in water, drained, 3 ounces	1.0	40
Cheese, cheddar, 1 ounce	0.3	12
Mushrooms, portobello, raw, ½ cup diced	0.1	4
Chicken breast, roasted, 3 ounces	0.1	4



Source: US Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service. FoodData Central, 2019.