

Covid-19 (Coronavirus) Isolation and Vitamin D (Jan 2021)

Vitamin D deficiency

In the current situation, where we are all being instructed by the government to stay at home to reduce the risk of getting the Coronavirus, it is likely that some people may not get enough Vitamin D. The information below will explain why Vitamin D is important for health and how you can make sure you are getting enough.

What is Vitamin D?

Vitamin D has the important role of helping the body to absorb the minerals (calcium and phosphorus) that are essential for healthy bones and teeth. It is also used by our muscles for movement and by our immune system to help fight some infections.

Where do we get Vitamin D from?

We can get some Vitamin D from food such as butter, oily fish, cream, red meat, egg yolks and liver, and some foods such as cereals have Vitamin D added. However, it is difficult for us to get the recommended amount of Vitamin D from food alone. The best source of Vitamin D is sunlight. Spending just 15 minutes outside will allow ultra-violet rays to be absorbed through the skin and then the body is able to make Vitamin D.

What happens if you don't get enough Vitamin D?

A lack of Vitamin D may lead to muscle weakness and bone softening. In children this is called Rickets and in adults, it is called Osteomalacia. Rickets affects developing bones and they can become deformed. Osteomalacia may cause pain, weakness and brittleness of bones that can result in increased fractures.

Are you getting enough Vitamin D?

Usually, from late March/early April to the end of September, the majority of people should be able to get all the Vitamin D they need from sunlight on their skin. However, because of the Covid-19 lockdown, everyone may need to follow the guidelines for Autumn and Winter.

During the Autumn and Winter, you need to get Vitamin D from your diet because the sun isn't strong enough for the body to make it. But since it's difficult for people to get enough Vitamin D from food, everyone (including pregnant and breastfeeding women) should consider taking a daily supplement of Vitamin D.

Some people need to take a daily supplement of Vitamin D throughout the year because they have very little or no sunshine exposure or they cannot absorb enough. This applies to those who:

- ❑ are not often outdoors – for example, if you're frail or housebound
- ❑ are in an institution like a care home
- ❑ usually wear clothes that cover up most of your skin when outdoors
- ❑ have dark skin – for example with an African, African-Caribbean or south Asian background.

How much Vitamin D do I need?

The Department of Health recommends that at risk groups should take Vitamin D supplements to make sure they get enough:

Breastfed babies from birth to 1 year of age should be given a daily supplement containing 8.5 to 10 micrograms of vitamin. As infant formula is fortified with Vitamin D, formula-fed babies do not need a Vitamin D supplement, until they are having less than 500ml of infant formula a day.

Children from the age of 1 year and adults need 10 micrograms of Vitamin D a day. This includes pregnant and breastfeeding women and people at risk of Vitamin D deficiency.

Where can I get Vitamin D supplements?

You can buy Vitamin D supplements or Vitamin Drops containing Vitamin D (for under 5s) at most pharmacies and supermarkets.

Women and children who qualify for the Healthy Start scheme can get free supplements containing the recommended amounts of Vitamin D.

For more information visit NHS Choices at: www.nhs.uk/live-well

Free Vitamin D

For a limited period of time Vitamin D is being made available for free for those considered at high risk of the effects of COVID-19. Clinically Extremely Vulnerable individuals need to apply by 11th January 2021.

The website link is <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/get-vitamin-d-supplements/>