Benefits of vitamin D
In recent years, research has pointed to a link between low levels of vitamin D and a list of serious ailments, including severe asthma, cancer, cognitive impairment in older adults and an increased risk of death from cardiovascular disease. In addition, studies have pointed to vitamin D playing a role in preventing or treating diabetes, multiple sclerosis, hypertension and glucose intolerance.1 Approximately 40 percent of babies and toddlers2 and up to 50 percent of older adults3 have inadequate levels of vitamin D. Vitamin D deficiency is likely prevalent across all age groups and populations. Are you getting enough?

What does it do?
Vitamin D absorbs calcium and promotes bone growth. Lack of vitamin D can cause your bones to be soft and prone to breaks.4 In addition, vitamin D helps improve muscle strength and immune function, reduces inflammation5 and plays a part in the life cycle of cells – a cycle that, when disrupted, can lead to cancer growth.6

How do I get enough vitamin D?
The most efficient way to get the vitamin D we need is through exposure to the sun. Thirty minutes of unprotected sun exposure twice a week would provide plenty of vitamin D for most of us. However, because of the risk of skin cancer, the American Academy of Dermatology suggests avoiding unprotected exposure to the sun.6 Therefore, foods and vitamin supplements are your best bet. Vitamin D isn’t naturally present in many foods, but in the U.S. most milk and breakfast cereal, as well as some margarines, yogurts and fruit juices, are fortified with vitamin D.7

Selected food sources of vitamin D7
The U.S. Food and Drug Administration recommends that adults and children age four and older consume 400 International Units (IUs) of vitamin D each day. Forty IUs equals 1 microgram (mcg). Food labels are not required to list vitamin D content unless a food has been fortified with it. Foods providing 20 percent or more of the daily value (DV) are considered to be high sources of a nutrient. See the table on the reverse page to find ways to add more vitamin D to your diet.
The potential of vitamin D

Vitamin D is still being studied in order to determine all of its benefits. So far, studies have suggested vitamin D might prevent or treat the following:

- Actinic keratosis
- Asthma
- Autism
- Auto-immune disease
- Bronchitis
- Cancer (breast, colon, prostate)
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- Chronic pain
- Connective tissue diseases
- Crohn’s disease
- Depression
- Diabetes (types 1 and 2)
- Fibromyalgia
- Flu
- Glucose intolerance
- Heart disease
- High cholesterol
- Hyperparathyroidism
- Hypertension
- Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD)
- Lupus vulgaris
- Mental illness
- Multiple sclerosis
- Muscle weakness
- Neuromuscular diseases
- Obesity
- Osteogenesis imperfecta
- Osteomalacia (bone pain)
- Osteoporosis
- Premenstrual syndrome (PMS)
- Psoriasis
- Renal osteodystrophy
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Tooth and gum disease
- Vitiligo

Sources:
- WebMD; Vitamin D Council; American Cancer Society

Resources

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