

## Supplementation

For adults who are at high risk of vitamin D deficiency, and are not able to get enough from sun exposure or diet, the recommendation is to take a supplement of between 400-1,000IU a day. This can be bought over the counter from pharmacies and supermarkets in the form of Colecalciferol. Pregnant women should have a maximum of 400IU per day.

All children under 5 years old are recommended to have a daily vitamin D supplement (see bottle for instruction and /or speak to your GP, pharmacist or health visitor). Brands such as Abidec, Dalivit or Ketovite can be purchased over the counter at the pharmacy.

## Healthy Start vitamins in Sandwell and West Birmingham CCG

Healthy Start vitamins contain the recommended amount of vitamin D and some other important vitamins. In Sandwell and West Birmingham these are available from health visitors and midwives, some children's centres and some pharmacies.



## Healthy Start and the prevention of vitamin D deficiency

Healthy Start vitamins are recommended for all pregnant women, women up to 1 year after they've had their baby, and children until their 4th birthday who are eligible for the scheme.



### Where do I get Healthy Start vitamins?

For pregnant women, your midwife will supply the first bottle of Healthy Start vitamins (if you are eligible) and information about where to collect further bottles. For children, ask your health visitor about where to collect the vitamins.

### Further Information

For an application form or further information about Healthy Start, speak to your midwife, family nurse, health visitor or visit [www.healthystart.nhs.uk](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk)

For further information on vitamin D go to the patient UK website: [www.patient.co.uk/health/Vitamin-D-Deficiency.htm](http://www.patient.co.uk/health/Vitamin-D-Deficiency.htm)



# Vitamin D

What is it?

Where does it come from?

Why is it important?

Who needs it?



healthcare  
without boundaries

## What is vitamin D?

Vitamin D forms in the skin when it is exposed to sunlight. It can also be obtained from some foods. We need vitamin D to maintain good health and to keep bones and muscles strong and healthy.

## How can I increase my vitamin D level?

Sunlight is the main source of vitamin D; more than 90% of what we need is supplied this way. Enjoying the sun safely, while taking care not to burn, can help to provide the benefits of vitamin D without overly raising the risk of skin cancer.

- People who are physically active and spend time outdoors are less likely to have low vitamin D levels.
- If skin on the hands, face and arms are exposed, 20-30 minutes spent outside a few days per week in the summer is enough; possibly longer during cloudy days.
- People with naturally darker skin (rarely or never burn) will need 3-6 times the exposure level of fair to olive skin.



## Which foods contain Vitamin D?

Vitamin D from food only meets about 10% of our needs. These sources are particularly important during the winter and among people at higher risk of vitamin D deficiency.

### Foods with vitamin D

- Oily fish are the best food source of vitamin D: salmon, sardines, pilchards, trout, kippers, eel, mackerel, ilish/hilsa and herring
- You should not have more than two portions per week if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.



- These foods contain small amounts of vitamin D: eggs, mushrooms and meat.



- These foods may have added vitamin D: margarine, infant formula, some breakfast cereals and yoghurt.

Chewing betel (shupari, gua) or paan can reduce the amount of active vitamin D in your body and should be completely avoided in pregnancy.



## Who might have low levels of vitamin D?



Everyone needs vitamin D. Lots of people in the UK do not have enough and need more. You are more at risk from not having enough if you:

- Are South Asian, African, African-Caribbean, or Middle Eastern
- Are over 65 years
- Are pregnant or breastfeeding. Breastfeeding is recommended for all babies up to the age of 6 months
- Cover up a lot of your body when outside (eg, wear the niqab or burqa)
- Have a diet restricted to certain food groups (eg, vegan)
- Are a baby, or growing child or teenager
- Spend most of your time indoors (eg, in hospital, housebound, care home)
- Have a medical condition with poor food absorption from your gut