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What you need to know about: Vitamin D

For good bone and muscle health it is important to maintain adequate intake of dietary calcium, safe sunlight exposure and foods which contain Vitamin D.

Public Health England recommends **most people in the UK** should take a Vitamin D supplement as it is difficult to obtain the recommended amount from food sources alone. Talk to your GP or pharmacist for advice.

Why have I been asked to take Vitamin D?

You have been asked to take Vitamin D as your levels of Vitamin D are either **Deficient (less than 30 nmol/L 25 (OH)D)** or **Insufficient (30-50 nmol/L 25 (OH)D)**.

You will have had a blood test to find out whether you are vitamin D deficient or insufficient. Vitamin D insufficiency may not have any symptoms, however if it is mild to moderate, you may experience vague symptoms such as tiredness and general aches and pains. Vitamin D deficiency is more serious, and is the name for a severe lack of Vitamin D. This can cause bones to become soft and weak which can lead to bone deformities. Here are the ranges of Vitamin D for adults:

Vitamin D Level	Status	Advice
Less than 30nmol/L	Deficient	Treatment dose then maintenance
Between 30-50nmol/L	Insufficient	Maintenance Dose
Above 50nmol/L	Sufficient	No treatment required but some patients may benefit from

The brand of Vitamin D that you are prescribed will depend on the level of your deficiency and your dietary requirements. **Your GP and Pharmacist will be able to advise you of the suitable brand for you at the correct price point.**

Treatment Dose: You will be advised of a brand that will meet the dosage you need, alongside any dietary requirements that you may have. Your GP will prescribe this for you and it will be costed at the normal prescription rate.

Maintenance Dose: It is advised that you speak to your community pharmacist for the most suitable preparation for your needs and you will be able to purchase this.

There are many different pricing points and brands of Vitamin D available, but your GP and pharmacy will be able to assist you in finding the product that is suitable for you.

The following residents of City and Hackney are entitled to free healthy start vitamins:

- Pregnant women
- New mums who have had a baby in the last year
- Babies and children from four weeks until their fourth birthday.

If your baby is formula fed they won't need extra vitamins until they're drinking less than about a pint of formula milk a day (approx. 500ml or about 18 fl oz.) This is because vitamins have already been added to formula milk.

How to get Healthy Start Vitamins:

- 1) Register and collect your vitamins at your nearest Hackney pharmacy—in the City of London go to Boots on Aldgate High Street or Nieman's chemist on Goswell Road.
- 2) Visit any pharmacy every eight weeks to collect more vitamins when you run out—you won't need to register again.
- 3) You can also collect them from Linden Children's Centre, Woodberry Down Children's Centre and the One O'clock Club in Clissold Park

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Where do I get Vitamin D from?

You can get Vitamin D naturally from a variety of sources. For example:

Foods rich in Vitamin D include:

- Oily fish e.g. sardines, salmon and mackerel
- Egg yolks, red meat and fortified milk
- Margarine, some breakfast cereals, some yoghurts and infant formula, which are fortified with Vitamin D

It is also useful to eat foods that are rich in Calcium, as Vitamin D aids the absorption of Calcium, promoting good bone health.

Foods rich in calcium include:

- Milk, yoghurt and cheese
- Vegetables - curly kale, okra, green beans
- Fruits - ready to eat figs, raw apricots
- Nuts - almonds, sesame seeds
- Desserts - custard made with milk, canned rice pudding
- Fish – tinned sardines in oil, white bait fried and tinned salmon
- Others – steamed tofu, cheese omelette

Alternative Sources of Vitamin D

As well as through diet and supplementation, you can get Vitamin D in alternative ways. For example:

Safe sunlight exposure:

Spending time in the sun can help the skin make Vitamin D naturally, but it is essential to be wise (**SMART**) when exposed to the sun:

Spend time in the shade between 11:00am and 3:00pm.

Make sure you never burn.

Aim to cover up with a T-shirt, hat and sunglasses.

Remember to take extra care with children.

Then use at least factor 15+ sunscreen.

Information above from NHS choices LiveWell 'How to get Vitamin D from sunlight' <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Summerhealth/Pages/vitamin-D-sunlight.aspx>