What is vitamin D and what does it do?

Over the past few years, we have been hearing more and more about vitamin D. Vitamin D is an important nutrient that is used in the body to build and maintain strong bones. It is known as a fat-soluble vitamin, which means that your body needs fat to absorb it. The body also uses vitamin D to help absorb the calcium that we get from food. If our body does not get enough vitamin D, we can develop thin, brittle bones known as osteomalacia.

How much vitamin D do I need each day?

This depends mainly on your age and is measured in IU, which stands for "international units". Men and women ages 19-70 need about 600 IU a day. Anyone 71 or older needs 800 IU a day.

How do I know if I have low vitamin D?

If you get lab work done with your doctor, be sure to ask to include vitamin D each time. If you get your blood work done in the winter or a time of year with limited sun, your levels may be lower than normal. A normal range is between 30.0 to 74.0 nanograms per milliliter (ng/mL). If you find you have a low level of vitamin D, it is important to first look at your diet. Are you eating foods that are high in vitamin D? If you are and your numbers are still low, you may want to talk to your doctor about a vitamin D supplement.

What foods have vitamin D?

- 3 ounces salmon, cooked = 447 IU
- 3 ounces, tuna fish, canned in water = 154 IU
- 1 cup orange juice, FORTIFIED* = 137 IU
- 1 cup milk (non fat), FORTIFIED* = 115 IU
- 6 ounces yogurt, FORTIFIED* = 80 IU
- 1 large egg with yolk (found in yolk) = 41 IU
- 1 cup of cereal, FORTIFIED* = 40 IU

What about the sun?

You can also get vitamin D from sunshine. In fact, many people get most of the vitamin D they need from the sun. To get enough vitamin D, it is recommended that you aim for: 10-15 minutes at least two to three times per week on your face, arms, hands, or back without sunscreen.

Your skin makes vitamin D after you spend time in the sun. Your liver and kidneys help change the vitamin D you get from foods or from sunlight into its active form, so that your body can use it. Be sure to talk to your doctor before sitting out in the sun. Here in New England, our bodies cannot get enough vitamin D from the sun in the colder months. That is why food and other sources are so important.

Can I find it on a label?

Yes, sometimes vitamin D will be listed on a label if the food contains it. However, unlike other nutrients it is not required to be listed. Vitamin D on a label is usually listed as a percentage (especially in fortified products). Simply multiply this number by 4 to get an estimate of IU.

Example:

Vitamin D = 25%
25 x 4 = 100 = 100 IU

**Nutrition Facts**

Serving Size: 1 cup (236mL)
Serving Per Container: 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount Per Serving</th>
<th>% Daily Value*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>90</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Fat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sugars</td>
<td>12g</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protein</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Vitamin A: 10%  Vitamin C: 4%
Calcium: 30%  Iron: 0%
Vitamin D: 25%

* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

INGREDIENTS: MILK, VITAMIN D₂ ADDED.
What is calcium and what does it do?

Calcium is an important mineral that helps build strong teeth and bones. Our bodies cannot make calcium, so it is important to get enough from our diet.

If we do not get enough calcium, our bodies pull calcium out of our bones. Over many years, this can lead to osteoporosis, a bone disease where bones become weak and fragile and are more likely to break.

How much calcium do I need each day?

The amount that you need each day depends on your age. Adults 51-70 years old need about 1000 milligrams (mg), and adults 71 and older need about 1200 milligrams a day. This is about three cups of dairy foods per day.

Most of us know that calcium comes from our main dairy sources such as milk, yogurt and cheese. However, there are plenty of alternative sources that can help you meet your recommended daily needs.

Is calcium listed on the nutrition facts label?

Yes, calcium is required to be listed on every label. Calcium is listed in a percentage (%) based on a 2000 calorie diet. In order to find out an estimate of how many milligrams (mg) it has, simply add a zero to the percentage. For example: If a product has 22% of calcium, it would have about 220 mg of calcium.

What dairy foods have calcium?

The following are approximate measures, products may vary:

- Milk, any variety, 1 cup: 300 mg
- Yogurt, low fat, 6 oz: 291 mg
- Swiss cheese, 1 oz*: 269 mg
- Cheddar cheese, 1 oz*: 200 mg
- Provolone cheese, 1 oz*: 212 mg
- Mozzarella cheese, 1 oz*: 205 mg
- Cottage cheese, 1/2 cup: 93 mg
- Parmesan cheese, 1 tbsp: 55 mg

*1 oz (ounce) of dairy counts for 1 cup of milk

What if I am lactose-intolerant? (Non-Dairy Sources)

- Spinach, frozen, boiled, 1 cup: 291 mg
- Collard greens, cooked, 1 cup: 265 mg
- Salmon, canned with bones, 3 oz: 180 mg
- Bok choy, cooked, 1 cup: 160 mg
- Kale, cooked, 1 cup: 95 mg
- Sesame Seeds, 1 tbsp: 88 mg
- Almonds, 1 oz (23 almonds): 75 mg
- Broccoli, steamed, 1 cup: 50 mg
- Black beans, cooked, 1 cup: 45 mg
- Whole wheat bread, 2 slices: 40 mg
- Sunflower seeds, 1/4 cup: 25 mg

What foods can I buy fortified with calcium?

- Orange juice, 1 cup: 350 mg
- Cereal, 1 cup: 350 mg
- Rice milk, 1 cup: 300 mg
- Soy milk, 1 cup: 300 mg
- Tofu, firm, 1/2 cup: 200 - 400 mg

Get both calcium and vitamin D at the same time by choosing salmon, fortified cereal, fortified orange juice, fortified milk, and/or fortified yogurt!