

VITAMIN D. WHAT EVERYBODY NEEDS TO KNOW

Vitamin D is an essential Vitamin for many functions in the body. It ensures strong bones and is vital for a general feeling of well-being.

Where do we get Vitamin D?

Some Vitamin D is obtained from food. However, most of the Vitamin D we need comes from sunlight. When sunlight reaches our faces and hands, then we make Vitamin D.

IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR GOOD HEALTH TO GET EXPOSURE TO SUNSHINE FOR AT LEAST AN HOUR A DAY WHEN WEATHER PERMITS.

How much sunshine do we need?

In a hot country the sun is very intense and Vitamin D can be made very rapidly in the skin. In northern Europe the sun is very weak and Vitamin D is made more slowly. The sun is only strong enough to make Vitamin D during the months April to October.

During the winter we do not make any Vitamin D at all in northern areas! The sun is only strong enough during certain parts of the day in summer i.e. between 10 o'clock and 4 O'clock. We need regular exposure of our face and hands to direct sunlight (not through a window) during these times in order to get enough Vitamin D. Some people make Vitamin D less efficiently than others.

What happens in winter?

Fortunately the body can store some Vitamin D to carry us through the winter in a northern climate. However, to be effective the levels need to be fairly high. If we finish the summer with low Vitamin D levels by the end of the winter our levels will be very low indeed.

What are the consequences of low Vitamin D Levels?

Firstly we would simply not feel as well and perhaps feel rather lacking in energy. Secondly, our muscles can be painful, achy and weak. Going up stairs for example can be difficult. Thirdly the bones in our body do not retain calcium properly and the bones may become weak. This can lead to the bone bending, as in children who get Rickets. In adults this can lead to abnormal pressures across the joints and pain in the muscles. Research suggests that low vitamin D makes Diabetes heart disease and cancer more likely to occur.

What is the treatment?

The first treatment is prevention. Sensible exposure to direct sunlight as often as possible, during the summer will usually prevent Vitamin D deficiency. If Vitamin D deficiency exists a short course of 10 days high dose Vitamin D is usually enough to fill up our body stores. After that a regular dose of Vitamin D should be taken every day to keep the level satisfactory. Children who are not exposed to enough sunlight should have DALIVIT Vitamins daily until they are 3 years old. Babies and children of Vitamin D deficient mothers should be treated.

What about the elderly?

Elderly people often avoid going out. Perhaps they feel unwell, are anxious or simply feel more comfortable at home. They are greatly at risk of low Vitamin D levels. They should take regular Vitamin D supplements.

What about pregnant women?

It is vital to have enough vitamin D in pregnancy. Women should have their vitamin D level measured early in pregnancy and treated if low. This helps the baby to get enough Vitamin D. All Breast feeding women should consider giving their babies vitamin D supplements. Any mother who has Vitamin D deficiency should ensure that her baby is treated with Vitamin D (DALIVIT) until they go to school

What about older children?

Vitamin D deficiency is common in the children of parents with Vitamin D deficiency; Children can be tested and treated accordingly. If you have Vitamin D deficiency then your children or parents may well suffer too. They can be tested and treated as needed.

IF YOU ARE VITAMIN D DEFICIENT MAKE SURE YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS ARE TESTED TOO. THEY ARE LIKELY TO HAVE THE SAME PROBLEM.