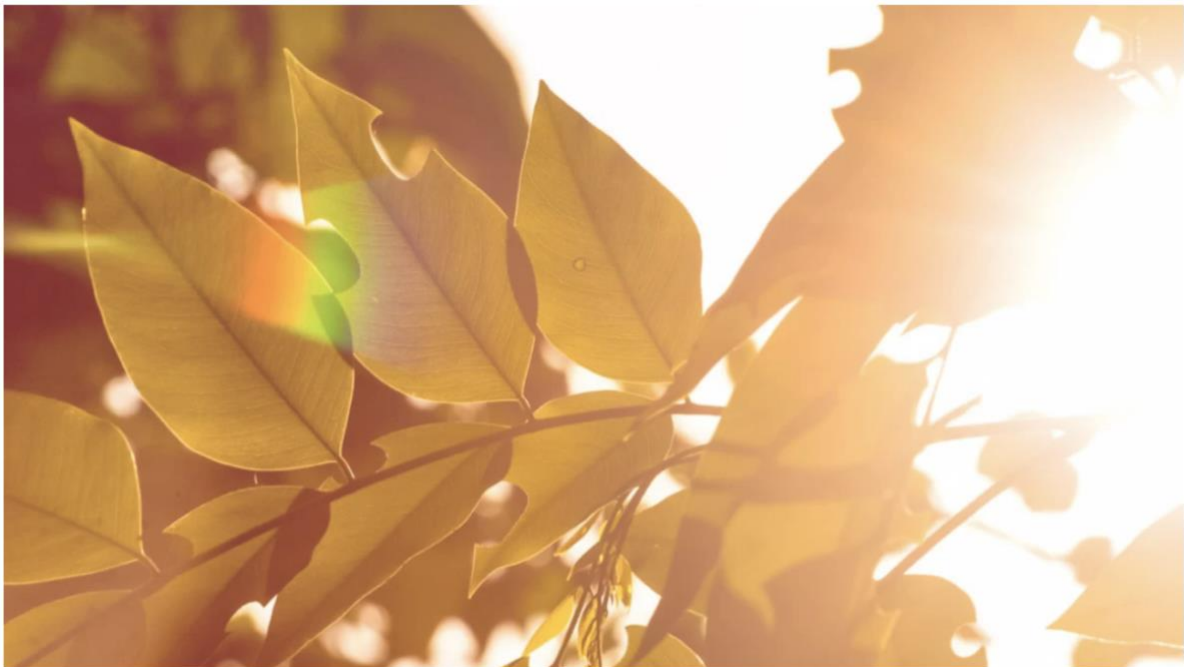




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Why Vitamin D – The ‘Sunshine Vitamin’ – Is SO Important



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Why Vitamin D... The 'Sunshine Vitamin'... Is SO Important

Vitamin D is an essential nutrient for our daily health and wellness. It serves a multitude of important functions, including being beneficial for our bones, teeth, and immune system. It also helps boost our mood.

According to the [National Institutes of Health](#), it has been estimated that more than one billion people have either vitamin D insufficiency or deficiency.

Seasonal Depression

Have you ever noticed that going for too many days without exposure to the sun impacts your mood?

Exposure to the sun is believed to increase the brain's release of serotonin, a hormone associated with boosting our mood, reducing anxiety, and helping us feel more focused and calmer. Without enough sunlight exposure, serotonin levels can dip, and thus potentially, our cheerful spirits.

Our body naturally creates vitamin D from direct sunlight on our skin when we are outdoors.

During the winter months, our exposure to the sun lessens. With shorter and colder days, many of us stay inside more. Consistent and direct sunlight is harder to come by.

Sitting by a sunny window does not have the same effect. The ultraviolet B (UVB) rays, which are what our body needs to make vitamin D, cannot penetrate through glass. Our body needs direct outdoor sunlight on our skin for it to produce vitamin D.

The change in seasons can trigger some wintertime blues. You may feel a mild level of seasonal depression. Making sure to eat right and take proper supplements can be particularly useful to reduce the winter blues.

It is no wonder that vitamin D is often called the sunshine vitamin. That is because it replicates our skin's response to sunlight.

Medical professionals have long known that in the winter, people living in more northern geographical locations have drops in their vitamin D levels.

Researchers from Vanderbilt University examined the seasonal vitamin D levels of 244 women with various health issues. The **study** reported that during the winter, 28% of the women had deficient levels of vitamin D and 33% had insufficient levels. During the summer, only 5% of the women had deficient levels, and 38% had insufficient levels.

The good news is that the women who took supplements in the winter, significantly elevated their vitamin D levels as opposed to those who did not add supplements.

Healthy Bones & Teeth

We need vitamin D to build and maintain strong, healthy bones, and to help ward off osteoporosis. But our body also needs calcium to get that job done.

Our body can only absorb calcium when vitamin D is present.

Calcium and vitamin D work in tandem. Calcium helps build and maintain bones, while vitamin D enables our body to effectively absorb calcium. If you are getting enough calcium, but are vitamin D deficient, the calcium could be going to waste.

Getting enough calcium and vitamin D in our diet helps lessen the risk of developing osteoporosis and brittle, easy-to-break bones. Children with severe vitamin D deficiency can develop rickets.

Eating a diet with foods that are rich in calcium, vitamin D, and protein will contribute to the body's ability to make and maintain strong bones. Exercising regularly, reducing excessive alcohol use, and avoiding smoking also gives our body a better opportunity to maintain bone health.

Supporting Immune Health

We know that keeping our immune system strong is important, even more so during these pandemic times.

But what is the immune system?

The immune system is made up of various organs, cells, and proteins. Its main functions are to neutralize harmful substances that enter our body from the environment; fight off disease-causing germs including viruses, parasites, bacteria, and infections, and remove them from our body; and ward off disease-causing changes in the body such as cancer cells.

When it is performing properly, we are not aware of our immune system. But when something interferes with its healthy flow, then we get sick.

Vitamin D is especially important as it regulates many other cellular functions in our body. Its anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and neuroprotective properties support immune health, muscle function, and brain cell activity.

Eating properly, spending as much time as possible in direct sunlight, regularly moving your body through some form of exercise, and taking vitamins for immune health are great ways to support your overall wellbeing.

Are You Vitamin D Deficient or With Low Levels?

Many people with a vitamin D deficiency have no symptoms.

In children, a lack of vitamin D can show up as muscle weakness or sore and painful muscles. In rare cases, severe vitamin D deficiency can cause rickets.

Lack of vitamin D in adults is more subtle. Signs of a deficiency may include fatigue, bone pain, muscle weakness, aches and pains, and mood change, including depression.

If you have any of these symptoms, speak with your doctor. A simple blood test can determine your vitamin D levels.

How Can I Get More Vitamin D?

To get more vitamin D, especially in winter months, eat fatty fish. While not many foods naturally contain vitamin D, salmon, mackerel, herrings, and sardines have substantial levels of it, so they are very good sources.

Other types of food that have vitamin D, although in smaller amounts than fatty fish, include egg yolks, milk, and fatty meats, like beef liver.

According to the [National Institutes of Health Office of Dietary Supplements](#), most of the vitamin D in the American diet, however, comes from foods that are fortified with vitamin D. Some types of yogurts, plant-based milk alternatives (soy, almond, and oat), cereals, orange juice, tofu, and even ice cream, are often fortified. Almost all dairy milk sold in the U.S. is fortified with vitamin D. Always remember to check the labels to make sure.

Some varieties of mushrooms are another good option. They are probably the richest natural non-animal food source of vitamin D. [According to the USDA](#), morel, chanterelle, maitake, and UV-treated portabella mushrooms tend to contain the most vitamin D, although levels vary based on growing and storage conditions.

Supplements

Taking supplements is a great way to incorporate more vitamin D into your body, and it allows you to know exactly how much you are getting.

According to the [Mayo Clinic](#), the recommended daily amount of vitamin D for children to age 12 months is 400 international units (IU), for adults ages 1 to 70, 600 IU is recommended, and for people over 70, the dosage is 800 IU.

For a boost of vitamin D that is also packed with an additional 33 nature-powered nutrients, try [mend Regenerate](#) for daily wellness. It is clinically proven to benefit bone health and muscle strength, heal everyday wear and tear, and support gut health. And it is delicious in a smoothie!

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