

# Patient Information for Adults about Vitamin D Inadequacy

Saskatchewan residents are at risk of low vitamin D levels from autumn to spring. Obtaining sufficient vitamin D from natural food sources alone is difficult. For many people, consuming vitamin D-fortified foods and being exposed to some sunlight are essential for maintaining a healthy vitamin D status.

Older adults are at increased risk of developing vitamin D insufficiency in part because as they age, skin cannot synthesize vitamin D as efficiently, they are likely to spend more time indoors, and they may have inadequate intake of the vitamin.

There is no clinical value in performing vitamin D tests on patients who are thought to be at risk for sub-optimal vitamin D levels and who would benefit from vitamin D supplementation. Testing for vitamin D is only recommended for certain medical conditions.

## **Do I need a blood test to check my vitamin D level?**

No, routine testing for vitamin D levels is only recommended for patients with certain medical conditions.

## **Which foods contain vitamin D?**

Foods with a higher amount of vitamin D include fish, liver, and egg yolk. Excellent sources of vitamin D are foods and beverages that have vitamin D added to them. Cow's milk always has added vitamin D. Orange juice, margarine, and soy beverage usually have it added. For other foods, check the label. You know vitamin D has been added if you see 'fortified' or 'enriched' on the label.

## **Should I take a Vitamin D supplement?**

You might find it difficult to get enough vitamin D from food alone. You can take a single vitamin D supplement or a multivitamin with vitamin D in it.

## **Do I need vitamin D?**

Vitamin D is important for everyone. Vitamin D plays an important role in helping the body to absorb calcium through the small intestine. Our bodies need calcium to help make and maintain healthy bones, muscles and teeth. Too little vitamin D may be linked to a variety of common diseases.

## **Health Canada Dietary Reference Intakes for Vitamin D**

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/vitamin/vita-d-eng.php#a15>