

## Q. Should I take a vitamin D supplement?

A. Probably. If you spend a lot of time indoors, there's a good chance you're low on vitamin D.

Why? A little time in the sun (15 to 20 minutes a day) helps the body make vitamin D. But most people spend a lot more time inside, at home, at work, or in the car than they used to (especially during the winter months).

### Is your vitamin D level low?

About 1 billion people have low vitamin D levels.<sup>1</sup> That's about 13 percent of the world's population. In the United States an estimated 42% of the population is vitamin-D deficient.

A blood test is the only way to tell if your vitamin D levels are low. But if you are vitamin-D deficient, symptoms can include:<sup>2</sup>

- Muscle pain and weakness
- Poor bone health
- Tingling sensation in hands or feet
- Difficulty walking

### Vitamin D health claims

Can getting enough vitamin D improve your health?



Yes. But probably not as much as marketers want you to think. Vitamin D sales generate an estimated \$1.1 billion a year.<sup>3</sup>

In the last five years, more than 20,000 scientific articles were published on vitamin D.

However, this new research suggests vitamin D may not be as good at preventing disease as we once thought.<sup>4</sup>

"Just because low D levels and disease seem to be correlated, doesn't mean that vitamin D deficiency is the cause," says lifestyle medicine expert Dr. Michael Greger. "In only a handful of conditions have interventional studies proven vitamin D to be effective."

### If you are going to take vitamin D...

It may help reduce fatigue and improve bone health. Having enough D in your blood may help you live longer, too.<sup>5</sup>

But it's not a cure-all for chronic disease and won't erase the impacts of poor food and lifestyle choices.

## ASK THE Wellness DOCTOR

### How much vitamin D should you take?

The National Institutes of Health recommends most adults take 600 to 800 international units of vitamin D per day.<sup>6</sup> However, some studies suggest 1,000 to 4,000 international units may be needed to maintain vitamin D levels.

You'll also find vitamin D in mushrooms, eggs, and fortified foods like orange juice, cereal, and cheese. But your best source of vitamin D for better health? Sunshine and a brisk walk.

### References

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