

## Supplementation

For adults who are at high risk of vitamin D deficiency, and are not able to get enough from sun exposure or diet, the recommendation is to take a supplement of between 400-1,000IU a day. This can be bought over the counter from pharmacists and supermarkets in the form of Colecalciferol. Commonly available brands include Solgar, Biolife, or Sunvite. Pregnant women should have a maximum of 400IU per day.

All children under 5 years old are recommended to have a daily vitamin D supplement (see bottle for instruction and /or speak to your GP, pharmacist or health visitor). Brands such as Abidec, Dalivit or Ketovite can be purchased over the counter at the pharmacy.

(See section below for further information on Healthy Start vitamins).

## Healthy Start and the prevention of vitamin D deficiency

Healthy Start vitamins are recommended for all pregnant women, women up to 1 year after they've had their baby, and children until their 4th birthday who are eligible for the scheme.

## Healthy Start vitamins in Tower Hamlets

Healthy Start vitamins contain the recommended amount of vitamin D and some other important vitamins. In Tower Hamlets these are available from health visitors and midwives, some children's centres and some pharmacies.

## Where do I get Healthy Start vitamins?

For pregnant woman, your midwife will supply the first bottle of Healthy Start vitamins and information about where to collect further bottles.

If you are not eligible for Healthy Start, in Tower Hamlets, pregnant women will still be able to obtain the first 3 bottles of the Healthy Start vitamins for free (6 months' supply).

For children, ask your health visitor about where to collect the vitamins.



## Further information

For an application form or further information about Healthy Start, speak to your midwife, family nurse, health visitor or visit [www.healthystart.nhs.uk](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk).

For further information on vitamin D go to the patient UK website:

[www.patient.co.uk/health/Vitamin-D-Deficiency.htm](http://www.patient.co.uk/health/Vitamin-D-Deficiency.htm)

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# Vitamin D

What is it?

Where does it come from?

Who needs it?

Why is it important?



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## What is vitamin D?

Vitamin D forms in the skin when it is exposed to sunlight. It can also be obtained from some foods. We need vitamin D to maintain good health and to keep bones and muscles strong and healthy.

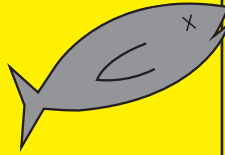

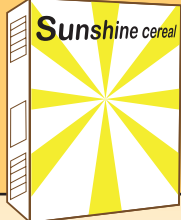
## How can I increase my vitamin D level?

Sunlight is the main source of vitamin D; more than 90% of what we need is supplied this way. Enjoying the sun safely, while taking care not to burn, can help to provide the benefits of vitamin D without overly raising the risk of skin cancer.

- People who are physically active and spend time outdoors are less likely to have low vitamin D levels
- If skin on the hands, face and arms are exposed, 20-30 minutes spent outside a few days per week in the summer is enough; possibly longer during cloudy days
- People with naturally darker skin (rarely or never burn) will need 3-6 times the exposure level of fair to olive skin.

## Which foods contain Vitamin D?

Vitamin D from food only meets about 10% of our needs. These sources are particularly important during the winter and among people at higher risk of vitamin D deficiency.

Foods with vitamin D	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Oily fish are the best food source of vitamin D: salmon, sardines, pilchards, trout, kippers, eel, mackerel, ilish/hilsa and herring</li><li>* You should not have more than two portions per week if you are pregnant or breastfeeding</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• These foods contain small amounts of vitamin D: eggs, mushrooms and meat</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• These foods have added vitamin D: margarine, some breakfast cereals and infant formula</li></ul>

Chewing betel (shupari, gua) or paan can reduce the amount of active vitamin D in your body and should be completely avoided in pregnancy.

## Who might not be getting enough?

Everybody needs vitamin D but some people may be more at risk of deficiency:

- people who have darker skin, for example, people of South Asian, African and African-Caribbean origin, because their bodies are not able to make as much vitamin D
- people who have little or no exposure to the sun, such as those who cover their skin for cultural reasons, who are housebound or confined indoors for long periods
- pregnant women. A mother's vitamin D is used to provide her baby with enough calcium to make healthy bones. Vitamin D stores get used up during pregnancy and breastfeeding, so women who have several pregnancies close together are at higher risk
- babies of mothers who are deficient in vitamin D, particularly breastfed babies. Breastfeeding is the best choice for babies; if vitamin D deficient, breastfeeding mothers and their babies should take a vitamin supplement; this is healthier than using infant formula
- overuse of sunscreen may lead to vitamin D deficiency, particularly if high sun protection factor (SPF) creams (factor 15 or above) are used, but you should always take care not to burn
- older people aged 65 years and over.

