



How to maintain a healthy vitamin D level – information for adults

- **All adults should consider taking 10 micrograms (400 units) of vitamin D a day** to help keep bones and muscles healthy, especially during the autumn and winter months when the sun is not strong enough for the body to make vitamin D. During the spring and summer months, many people can get all the vitamin D they need through sunlight on their skin and from a balanced diet and it may not be necessary for them to take a vitamin D supplement during these months. However other people will not get enough vitamin D from sunlight alone and the Department of Health and Social Care recommends that the following groups of people take a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms (400units) of vitamin D throughout the year:
 - People who are not often outdoors – for example frail or housebound people.
 - People who are in an institution like a care home.
 - People who usually wear clothes that cover up most of their skin when outdoors.
 - People who have dark skin – for example people from an African, African-Caribbean or south Asian background.
- **Vitamin D supplements are available to buy from pharmacies, health food shops or supermarkets** and typically cost less than £1 to buy for a month's supply (although sometimes it may be necessary to buy 3 month's supply at a time). Please note some women may be able to get vitamin supplements containing vitamin D free of charge if they are pregnant or breastfeeding via the Healthy Start scheme –your health visitor or local pharmacy can provide more information.
- Adults who have previously had treatment from their doctor for vitamin D deficiency or a low vitamin D level may have been recommended to buy a supplement containing 25 micrograms (1000 units) of vitamin D. This is a suitable dose in this situation and supplements of this strength can also be bought at a reasonable cost.
- **Get regular exposure to sunlight.** The body creates vitamin D from direct sunlight on the skin when outdoors. It is important that sun exposure is as safe as possible and you should be careful not to burn in the sun, so take care to cover up, or protect your skin with sunscreen, before your skin starts to turn red or burn if you're out in the sun for long periods to reduce the risk of skin damage and skin cancer.
- **Eat foods that contain higher amounts of vitamin D** as part of a healthy balanced diet, for example:
 - oily fish – such as salmon, sardines, herring and mackerel
 - red meat
 - liver
 - egg yolks
 - fortified foods – such as some fat spreads and breakfast cereals

Further information on vitamin D from the NHS is also available on-line from the following link:

NHS Choices Vitamin D <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/vitamins-minerals/Pages/Vitamin-D.aspx>

