

Vitamin D Self Care Guidelines

Following the review by the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) on the evidence of vitamin D and health, Public Health England (PHE) have advised that to protect bone and muscle health, everyone needs vitamin D equivalent to an average daily intake of 400 units (10 µg)

PHE advise that everyone should consider taking a daily supplement containing 400 units (10 µg) of vitamin D during the autumn and winter months (i.e. between October to March).

Those groups at high risk of vitamin D deficiency (see Table 1) should consider taking a daily supplement containing 400 units (10 µg) of vitamin D throughout the year.

General Lifestyle Advice

Appropriate lifestyle advice which encourages, ‘enjoying the sun safely whilst taking care not to burn’ (**please note: exposure to sunlight through windows is insufficient because glass blocks UVB light**), adequate dietary intake and daily vitamin D supplementation where necessary, should be provided to all patients.

- [NHS Choices provides up to date advice on vitamin D and sunlight.](#)

Groups at risk of Vitamin D deficiency

The Department of Health recommends vitamin D supplementation in certain high risk adult groups in order to prevent Vitamin D deficiency, as per Table 1.

Table 1: Department of Health Recommendations on Vitamin D supplementation in the UK (Adults)

Groups at risk of vitamin D deficiency
All pregnant and breastfeeding women *
People aged 65 years and over (particularly those living in institutions or who are not regularly exposed to sunlight)
People who are not exposed to much sun (e.g. housebound individuals and those who cover their skin for cultural reasons)
People with pigmented skin (includes people of African, African-Caribbean and South Asian family origin)
Recommendation: Promote self-care - advise over the counter (OTC) supplements containing 400 units (10 mcg) per day

**Pregnant /breastfeeding women may be eligible to obtain vitamins free of charge as part of the Healthy Start Scheme. Further information on the eligibility criteria can be found at www.healthystart.nhs.uk.*

Pregnant or breastfeeding women who are not eligible for Healthy Start, can purchase Healthy Start vitamins from community pharmacies or be advised to buy an over the counter multivitamin preparation with similar vitamin and mineral composition to the Healthy Start vitamins, which are available at most pharmacies and larger supermarkets (see Table 2)

- Funding of vitamin D supplements to protect and maintain bone, teeth and muscle health and for long term maintenance is a personal responsibility.
- Vitamin D is readily available to purchase in pharmacies, health food shops and supermarkets at a far lower cost than on prescription.
- It is expected that patients will purchase such supplements.
- Community pharmacists or other healthcare professionals are able to advise on suitable vitamin D products.

This does not affect GP prescribing of high-dose Vitamin D preparations that are not available over the counter.

Note: The recommendations in this document should not replace clinical judgement as the decision to prescribe remains with the individual prescriber. There will be circumstances when it may be appropriate to prescribe these medicines. Under the NHS regulations GPs should prescribe any drugs that he or she feels are needed for a patient's medical care. A patient is entitled to drugs that the GP believes are necessary, not those which the patient feels should be prescribed ¹.

1. British Medical Association. Prescribing in General Practice. June 2015.
<https://www.bma.org.uk/advice/employment/gp-practices/service-provision/prescribing/prescribing-and-dispensing>

Table 2: Examples of adult vitamin D nutritional supplements suitable for pregnant women (Prices from June 2017*)

Product	Strength	Approximate price	Source	Suitability
Healthy Start Vitamins for Pregnant women Vitamin D3	400 units (10mcg) (Also contains vitamin C and folic acid)	56 tablets free of charge where eligible	Available from midwives, health visitors and children's centres. For more info visit www.healthystart.nhs.uk	Suitable for vegetarians but not vegans
PregnaCare® multivitamins and minerals Vitamin D3	400 units (10mcg) (Also contains multiple other constituents)	30 tablets Prices vary *from £4-£6	Various supermarkets, chemists and online	Suitable for vegetarians but not vegans
Sanatogen® Mum to Be Multivitamins and minerals Vitamin D3	400 units (10mcg) (Also contains multiple other constituents)	60 tablet Prices *from £13	Various supermarkets, chemists and online	Suitable for vegetarians but not vegans

Table 3: Examples of OTC (Over the Counter) Vitamin D preparations available for adults (Prices from June 2017*)

Brand	Strength	Approximate price	Source	Suitability
Boots Pharmaceuticals® Vitamin D3	1000 units (25mcg) tablets	90 tablets* £4.99	Available for purchase only from Boots or www.boots.com	Suitable for vegetarians but not vegans
Holland and Barrett® Fast Acting Liquid Vitamin D3	1000 units (25mcg)/ 10 drops	59mls *£13.99	Available for purchase only from Holland and Barrett or www.hollandandbarrett.com	Suitable for vegetarians but not vegans
BioLife® Vitamin D3 chewable tablets	1000 units (25mcg) tablets	90 chewable tablets *£9.98	Available for purchase only from www.lifestylenaturalhealth.co.uk	Suitable for vegetarians but not vegans
Nature's Remedy® Vitamin D3	1000 units (25mcg) tablets and capsules	200 tablets/ capsules *£8.99	Available for purchase only from www.naturesremedy.co.uk	Suitable for vegetarians but not vegans
Superdrug® Vitamin D3	500 units (12.5mcg) tablets	90 tablets *£2.15	Available for purchase only from Superdrug or www.superdrug.com	Suitable for vegetarians but not vegans
Valupak® Vitamin D3	1000 units (25mcg) tablets	60 tablets* £0.99	Available from pharmacies	Suitable for vegetarians but not vegans