**VITAMIN D PATIENT LEAFLET**

Vitamin D is required for the maintenance of healthy bones and teeth. It has also been shown to support the function of the immune system, maintenance of normal muscle function and Vitamin D has been in the news recently because of possible links in reducing the incidence of other serious conditions. Vitamin D deficiency is very common, with more than half of the adult population in the UK having insufficient levels of Vitamin D. Most affected people either don’t have symptoms, or have vague aches and pains, and are unaware of the problem.

**SUNSHINE IS THE BEST AND ONLY NATURAL SOURCE OF VITAMIN D**

The best way to maintain good levels of Vitamin D is through exposure to sunlight.

Adults and children need to expose face and forearms to midday sunlight for 20 to 30 minutes, two or three times a week from April to September. This is enough to achieve healthy Vitamin D levels that last through the year.

**10 minutes of midday Summer sun generates 3,000 units of Vitamin D** without sun block. After this period, sun block can be applied.

People with dark skins should receive twice as much sunlight as people with fair skins. People with freckled or very pale skin, should take particular care to prevent sun burn which causes skin damage and possibly some types of skin cancer.

**DIET IS A POOR SOURCE OF VITAMIN D**

‘Oily’ fish is the richest source of Vitamin D with lesser amounts received from dairy products.

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| **Food type (100gm approx.)**  | **Vitamin D content (units)**  |
| Herring, sprat, pilchard, sardine, trout  | 400  |
| Salmon, supplemented margarine and cereals  | 200  |
| Eggs (2 eggs)  | 100  |
| Whole Milk 8-oz glass\*  | 100  |
| Butter, cheese  | 50  |

It is difficult to obtain enough vitamin D from our diet, only 10% of vitamin D production is from diet (eg: oily fish) the other 90% can be made in the skin if there is enough sunlight.

It is particularly important for certain groups to have extra vitamin D eg: those on restricted diets, those using sunblock, adults with reduced exposure to sunlight and housebound.

**ALL pregnant women and children aged 6 months – 5 years are recommended to take Vitamin D supplements.**

These can either be obtained from a local chemist: There are multivitamins for expectant mothers which contain vitamin D eg: Pregnacare or multivitamins for children which contain vitamin D eg: Abidec or Dalivit, or you can get Healthy Start Vitamins if you qualify.

**SUN IS BEST for Vitamin D but your GP might suggest that you take a supplement of Vitamin D, especially in the winter months.**

People taking high doses of Vitamin D regularly, should ensure that they receive a blood test at least once a year, in order to check whether the Vitamin D level is within satisfactory limits.

**Nutritional Vitamin D Supplements**

These can be bought from pharmacies (chemists) or health food shops or online. Look out for the ones with at least 1000 units (international units, iu) of Vitamin D. These can be swallowed without the need to dissolve or chew as they don’t contain calcium. Some examples of supplements are listed below but other supplements are also available.

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| COMPANY | WHATS AVAILABLE |
| Holland & Barrett[www.hollandandbarrett.com](http://www.hollandandbarrett.com)0870 606 6605 | 400iu tabs - 100 for £3.29 (250 for £7.65)1000iu caplets - 100 for £7.65 |
| Boots[www.boots.com](http://www.boots.com)0845 609 0055 | 500iu tabs - 90 for £1.991000iu tabs - 90 for £5.10 |
| Lambertswww.lambertshealthcare.co.uk01892 554 313 | 400iu tabs - 120 for £5.751000iu tabs - 120 for £8.50 |
| Healthspanwww.healthspan.co.ukFreephone 0800 73 123 77 | Vit D3 Super Strength tabs 1000iu 240 for £7.45 |
| BigVits[www.bigvits.co.uk](http://www.bigvits.co.uk)only available online | 400iu - 180 for £5.451000iu - 250 for £11.952400iu - 120 for £6.45 (360 for £11.95)5000iu - 120 for £12.95 (360 for £24.95)10000iu - 120 for £7.95 (360 for £15.95)(some suitable for vegetarians) |
| Nature’s Remedy<http://www.naturesremedy.co.uk>online order only | 400iu tabs - 100 for £3.991000iu tabs - 100 for £6.99 (200 for £11.99)2000iu softgel - 90 for £8.995000iu tabs - 100 for £14.99 (200 for £27.99)10000iu tabs - 60 for £14.99 |

Healthy start vitamins are FREE to those eligible for the Healthy Start scheme and if not they can be bought very cheaply. A two month supply costs £1.80 for women vitamins and 91p for children vitamins.

Visit the website at [www.healthystart.nhs.uk](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk) or ask your GP/midwife or health visitor for advice.