



# Vitamin D and Its Role in Reducing Cancer Risk

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**Newsletter**

Did you know that Vitamin D is technically not a Vitamin? It is the name given to a group of fat-soluble prohormones (substances that are needed to make hormones and usually have little hormonal activity by themselves). Two major forms of Vitamin D that are important to people are Vitamin D2, or ergocalciferol, and Vitamin D3, or cholecalciferol. Vitamin D2 is made naturally by plants, and Vitamin D3 is made naturally by the body when the skin is exposed to ultraviolet radiation (in particular, UVB radiation) in sunlight.



## Why do we even need Vitamin D?

Vitamin D is essential to strong bones, so not having enough can lead to conditions like osteoporosis (a brittle bone disease). In fact, Vitamin D is important to the body and essential for good health because:

- It helps improve muscle strength and immune function.
- It helps reduce inflammation.
- It promotes the absorption of calcium from the small intestine.
- It helps maintain adequate blood levels of the calcium and phosphate needed for bone formation, mineralization (incorporating minerals to increase strength and density), growth, and repair.

## How do we get it?

Most people get the Vitamin D they need through sun exposure. It can also be obtained through the diet. These foods include fatty fish, fish liver oil, and eggs. Most dietary Vitamin D comes from fortified foods, such as milk, juices, yogurt, bread, and breakfast cereals. Of course you can also obtain it by using daily supplements.

## What about its role in Cancer Risk Reduction?

Observational research shows that low levels of Vitamin D increase the risk of some cancers, including those of the breast, colon, rectum, ovary, kidney,

lung and uterus. Although unclear why, Vitamin D in adequate amounts appears to help regulate cellular growth, potentially preventing cells from becoming cancerous. Cancer researchers have discovered that Vitamin D regulates a number of genes in various cancers, including prostate, colon and breast cancers. Recent studies have suggested that Vitamin D deficiency may also impact the outcome once someone is diagnosed with cancer.

## How much should we take?

Due to our northern latitude and because the sun's rays are weak in the fall and winter, The Canadian Cancer Society recommends that Canadian adults consider taking a Vitamin D supplement. Talk to your pharmacist or doctor about taking 1,000 International Units (IU) a day during fall and winter months. However, you may be at higher risk of not getting enough Vitamin D if you:

- are over 50
- have dark skin
- don't go outside very much
- wear clothing covering most of your skin

If you happen to be in one of these groups, talk to your pharmacist or doctor about whether you should take a Vitamin D supplement of 1,000 IU every day, all year round.

Your Remedy'sRx pharmacist is always available to help you with your healthcare and medication needs.

The contents herein are for informational purposes only. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition. To keep your personally identifiable information accurate, current, and complete, please contact us by emailing the webmaster at [wendy@remedys.ca](mailto:wendy@remedys.ca). To opt out of our service, please send an email to [wendy@remedys.ca](mailto:wendy@remedys.ca) with "opt me out" in the subject line.

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