

Getting the
Vitamin D Dose
That's Right for YOU

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A GIFT FROM MARIE RUGGLES, RD, CN, CDE,



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Overview

Even the most conscientious, healthy eater can fall short on key vitamins and minerals. This is especially true for vitamin D.

Often referred to as our universal guardian, vitamin D frequently requires supplementation since it's nearly impossible to get adequate amounts from diet alone—unless your sun exposure is sufficient to optimize your body's vitamin D manufacturing all year long. More on that below.

This nutrient directs gene behavior, with over 3,000 genes that rely on it for proper function. It's that important. Vitamin D is also involved in everything from mood and bone health to immunity.

On top of that, a wonderful benefit of maintaining optimal Vitamin D levels is that it may reduce your risk of cancer, osteoporosis, high blood pressure, anxiety, and heart disease, just to name a few!

You may be deficient if:

- You don't take a vitamin D supplement and it's the middle of winter
- You live in a warm climate but rarely get out in the sun
- You live in a warm climate and spend time outdoors but always cover your entire body with sunblock

Overview

Even if you do enjoy sunshine regularly or take supplemental vitamin D, you may need extra because you're:

- Overweight
- Over 65 years of age
- Pregnant or breastfeeding
- Post-bariatric surgery
- Chronically inflamed
- Living at a high altitude
- On medications that deplete vitamin D

Low levels of serum vitamin D (the amount in your blood) makes us more vulnerable to infections, especially respiratory infections. Virus infections such as the common cold and flu are most common in winter, and that's not just because they're more easily transmitted indoors during cold weather. The fact is, vitamin D levels tend to be at their lowest in winter, and that can mean weaker immune systems.

Optimal Vitamin D Level to Aim for

The Institute for Functional Medicine recommends aiming for 60-80 ng/mL of vitamin D in your lab evaluation (blood test). Since we are all biologically different, your needs may vary slightly, but this is a reasonable and safe level for most people.

Keep in mind that your vitamin D levels may have wide variations throughout the year, especially if you avoid the outdoors for an extended period of time due to cold weather.



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Getting Tested

To check your serum vitamin D level, you'll need a specific test called "serum 25-hydroxy vitamin D."

When requesting a vitamin D test during your yearly wellness checkup, ask for two additional lab orders for four and eight months later. If your initial vitamin D level is low and your medical practitioner prescribes a supplement, the next test should show that the therapeutic dose is raising your serum (blood) level.

Remember, without testing, you're just guessing.

In some cases, there's no need to make an appointment just to get an initial or follow up vitamin D testing order. Many practitioners utilize computerized systems to electronically submit orders to your local lab, and no paperwork is needed.

If your practitioner questions your request, inform them that you're proactive in your healthcare, and maintaining an adequate D level is a critical piece to this approach.

Test at least twice yearly. If you tend to get bronchitis and other respiratory infections, it's best to monitor more frequently.

Calculating Your Dose

If your medical practitioner is nutrition-minded, they will review your lab results and recommend the best level for your constitution. And if you're deficient, they'll also prescribe the starting amount of vitamin D needed to achieve that goal.

If your practitioner is unable to guide you confidently, Grassroots Health, a nonprofit research organization that focuses on vitamin D specifically, has an easy-to-use, [free online calculator](#) to determine the right dosage for your specific needs. Simply add your lab result into their calculator and follow the directions.

Typical doses range from 1000 to 5000 IUs (international units) daily. Some practitioners will suggest a once weekly dose of 50,000 IUs for people who are very deficient. I prefer smaller daily doses.

If your initial vitamin D level is below 40, it's okay to take 15,000 IUs for three days, then take the amount recommended from the above calculator.

If you are unable to get an assessment of your current serum level, the Institute for Functional Medicine recommends starting with a daily dosage of 5,000 IU and then test as soon as possible.

It may take some experimentation to find the dosage that will keep you in the optimal range of 60 ng/mL. In addition, the dosage required to maintain this range may vary during the year.

Getting Your Vitamin D from the Sun

"Universal guardian" is one name for vitamin D, but it's also known as the "sunshine vitamin" because it can be synthesized in the skin from exposure to sunlight. Whenever possible, I recommend getting your vitamin D naturally from sunshine.

Spending fifteen minutes, two to three days a week, in the noon sun with as much of your body exposed as possible (no sunblock), is a good way to increase your levels naturally. Some studies indicate that the best time for producing vitamin D is when the sun is directly overhead. I wouldn't worry too much about getting out at that exact time; just being in the sun is good for you in so many ways.

If you are over 65 or dark-skinned, you may require more than fifteen minutes of sun exposure to achieve optimal vitamin D levels. In fact, individuals over age 65 may require up to three times more time in the sun to make an adequate supply of vitamin D.

If you plan to use the sun to increase your D, limit your initial exposure to allow your body to rev up its ability to produce pigmentation that will give you some color while protecting you from overexposure to the sun. If you are light-skinned, limit your initial exposure to a few minutes.

Vitamin D Supplements

For most deficient individuals, supplemental vitamin D is the only way to achieve an adequate level.

Vitamin D3 (as opposed to D2) is the best form to take because it's more biologically compatible with human physiology. D3 is the form your body makes in response to sun exposure, and it's more effective for increasing the serum D level.

Vitamin D is a fat-soluble vitamin that's better absorbed when taken with some fat or at your largest meal. One study found that taking a supplement with dinner increased blood levels of vitamin D 50% more than when it was taken with breakfast. This may be due to a higher level of fats found in food such as meat and fish typically served for the evening meal.

Not all vitamin D3 supplements are created equal. For example, it's better if vitamin D is combined with vitamin K derivatives (K1 and K2) since they work as a team.

For example, vitamin D increases the absorption of calcium, and vitamin K helps to usher calcium into bones where it belongs. Without vitamin K, however, calcium can wind up where it's not needed and wreak havoc in the arteries and joints.

Many vitamin D supplements contain an appropriate level of vitamin K1 and K2. But you can also find less costly vitamin D supplements that don't include vitamin K.

Vitamin D Supplements

To save money, you can purchase vitamin D3 with only vitamin K2 and consume it with a food that's high in vitamin K1, such as broccoli, kale, mustard greens, swiss chard, collard greens, or spinach.

Alternatively, you can save even more money by purchasing vitamin D3 without any vitamin K and consume it with both vitamin K1 and K2 foods. Good sources of K2 include fermented vegetables such as cabbage, natto (fermented soybeans), and aged cheese like authentic gouda, Milner, cheddar, stilton, camembert, Roquefort, and cheese made from raw milk.



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Supplement Brands I Recommend

Here are a few of the vitamin D supplements that I recommend. They're produced by companies that carefully evaluate the ingredients that go into their formulations. Plus, they don't contain any unhealthy fillers.

D3 with Vitamins K1 and/or K2

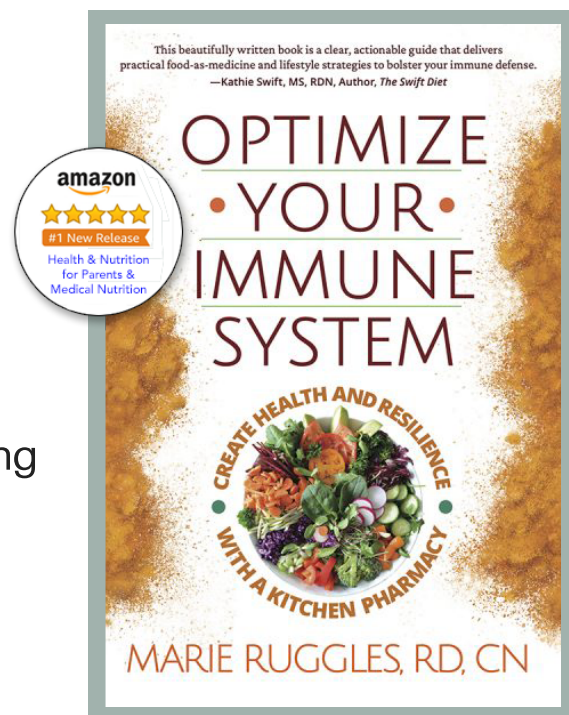
- ♥ Designs for Health: Vitamin D Supreme with 5,000 IU of Vitamin D + K1 and K2
- ♥ Ortho Molecular Products: Liquid Vitamin D3 + K2 with 1,000 IU of D

Vitamin D Only

- ♥ Nature's Way Vitamin D3 with 2,000 IU of D
- ♥ Carlson Liquid Super Daily D3 drops with 1,000 IU of D3.

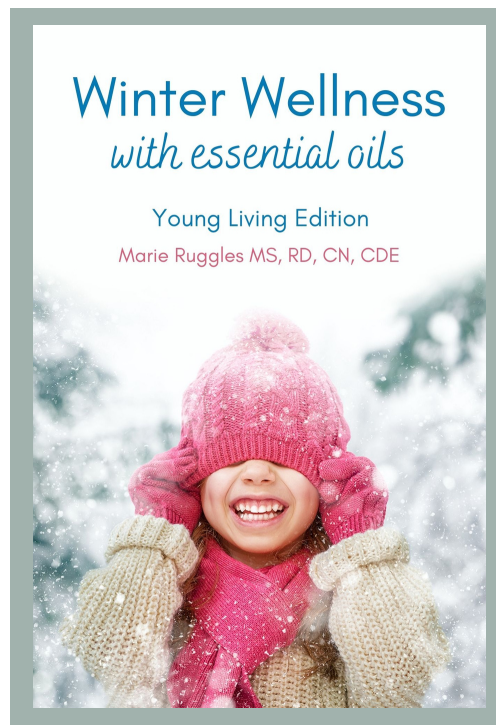
Note: Some companies list vitamin D in micrograms (mcg).
25 mcg = 1,000 IU.

For more on the top 6 immune strengthening nutrients, refer to my book, [Optimize Your Immune System: Create Health and Resilience with a Kitchen Pharmacy](#)



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For more on all my meticulously vetted, top supplement recommendations for energy, joints, immunity, and multiple vitamins, visit ♥ [Products Marie Loves](#).



My Winter
Wellness Guide
is coming soon!
[Click here to
sign up for the
waitlist.](#)

Caution: The above recommendations are for adults. Check with your healthcare provider before taking vitamin D supplements if you have a history of kidney stones, hypercalcemia, hyperparathyroidism, lymphoma (either Hodgkin's or non-Hodgkin's), granulomatous disease (sarcoidosis,) tuberculosis, kidney disease, or liver disease. Check with your practitioner if you're on medication (such as warfarin) or have any health condition which requires monitoring your vitamin K intake. If you're on a blood thinner, remember that it's important to consume the same amount of vitamin K every day.

Disclaimer: All recommendations are for non-pregnant, non-nursing adults. The contents of this book are for educational purposes only. It should not be used in any way as a substitute for professional medical advice or treatment with your physician or other qualified healthcare provider. It is not provided to diagnose, prescribe, or treat any condition.

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