

Performance Point

Vitamin D: Are You Getting Enough?



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Why is it Important?

Vitamin D is unlike any other vitamin. It is converted into an active hormone in the body and affects how most cells grow and perform. We know that vitamin D is needed to absorb calcium, that it builds strong bones and improves muscle strength and balance. Many observational studies suggest that vitamin D also boosts the immune system and may help prevent cancer.

Starving for Sunshine?

Vitamin D is called the sunshine vitamin because it is produced naturally in your skin after you have soaked in UVB rays. Unfortunately, most Canadians are vitamin D deficient, since we do not get enough sunlight in the winter to make vitamin D.

Are you at Risk?

- Do you have dark skin?
- Do you train indoors?
- Do you wear sunscreen daily?
- Do you have a spinal cord injury?
- Do you train fully covered e.g. skiers?
- Do you live in Canada in the winter?

How Much is Enough?

If you answered "yes" to any of the questions above, take a vitamin D supplement to get your dose of the sunshine vitamin. From April to September, the recommended dosage is 600 IU per day. From October to March, when Canada does not get UVB rays, the recommended dosage is 1000 IU per day. Remember, if you travel to Mexico or South America in the winter, the higher dose is not necessary. Note that the maximum safe dose is 2000 IU vitamin D per day.

Which Supplement should you take?

Most multivitamin/mineral supplements contain 200IU or 400IU of vitamin D. The following brands sell vitamin D supplements in a 400IU and 1000IU dose: Natural Factors, Jamieson and Swiss. Athletes are reminded that they are responsible for what is found in their doping control sample, and that supplements are always taken at their own risk.

Where do you get it?

Most vitamins are found in a variety of foods, but vitamin D is more elusive. It is only found in fish, egg yolk and fortified dairy products.

For more information on Vitamin D, please consult your Canadian Sport Centre Pacific Sport Dietitian.

How much SUN do you need?

You can get your daily dose of vitamin D on a clear sunny day. Let your face and arms soak in the sun for 15-30 minutes, and *then* lather on the sunscreen to prevent skin cancer and sunburns. To get the right rays, go out at midday, when your shadow is shorter than your height.

Food Sources of Vitamin D

Food	Serving		Vitamin D
Salmon, baked, sockeye	100g	3.5 oz	906 IU
Salmon, canned, sockeye with bones and liquid	100g	3.5 oz	780 IU
Salmon, canned, pink, with bones and liquid	100g	3.5 oz	581 IU
Salmon, canned, chum with bones and liquid	100g	3.5 oz	269 IU
Sardines, Pacific, drained with bones	100g	3.5 oz	480 IU
Cod liver oil	5 ml	1 tsp	400 IU
Oysters, pacific, boiled or steamed	100g	3.5 oz	320 IU
Halibut, atlantic or pacific baked or broiled	100g	3.5 oz	192 IU
Milk, fortified	250ml	1 cup	111 IU
Rice or soy milk, fortified	250ml	1 cup	88 IU
Tuna, white, canned in water, salted, drained	100g	3.5 oz	80 IU
Margarine, fortified	10ml	2 tsp	60 IU
Tuna, light, canned in water, salted, drained	100g	3.5 oz	48 IU
Egg yolk	1		26 IU
Yogurt	100ml	3.5 oz	20 IU

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