

# Vitamin D

**and the affects on your overall health.**

Vitamin D is a fat-soluble nutrient your skin produces using sunlight.

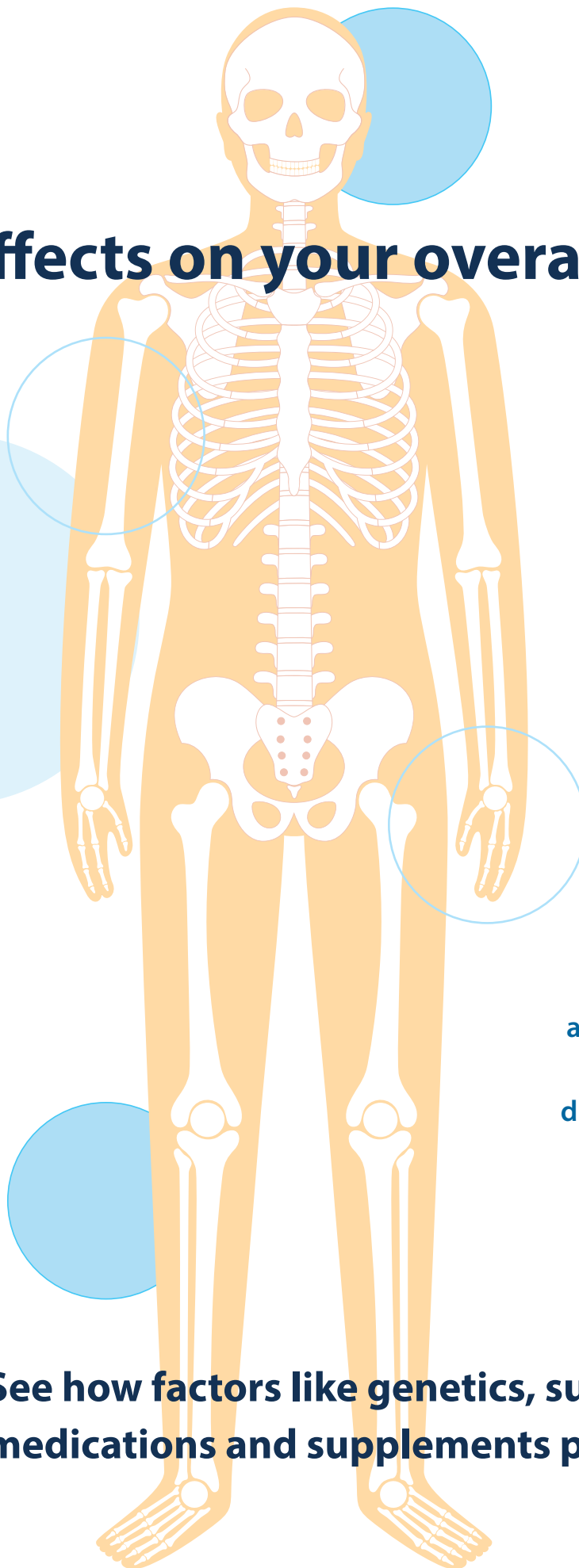
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It helps your body absorb calcium, a main building block for strong bones and teeth.

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Together, vitamin D and calcium protect you from osteoporosis, a disease that weakens the bones, making them more likely to break.

**See how factors like genetics, sunlight, food, medications and supplements play a role.**



# It's more than having strong bones.

**Your body needs vitamin D for other functions too:**



**Your nerves need it to carry messages between your brain and your body.**

**Your immune system needs it to fight off bacteria and viruses and some cancers.**

**Your muscles need it to move.**

**Vitamin D also plays a role in sleep regulation.**

More studies need to be done to determine whether vitamin D supplements can prevent or treat sleep disturbances.

## Supplements

If you live in a northern climate, have darker skin, use sunscreen or don't spend much time outdoors, you may need to take a vitamin D supplement to get the recommended daily intake. But don't overdo it. Too much vitamin D has been linked to health problems.

## How much vitamin D do we need daily?

According to the National Institutes of Health, the average recommended daily amounts of vitamin D by age are:

- **Birth to 12 months:** 10 mcg (400 IU)
- **Children 1–13 years:** 15 mcg (600 IU)
- **Teens 14–18 years:** 15 mcg (600 IU)
- **Adults 19–70 years:** 15 mcg (600 IU)
- **Adults 71 years and older:** 20 mcg (800 IU)
- **Pregnant and breastfeeding teens and adults:** 15 mcg (600 IU)



# Low vitamin D - factors and fixes

## Factors that can affect your ability to produce vitamin D:

- Skin color
- Lack of sun exposure, due to lifestyle, season or latitude
- Breastfeeding
- Age
- Medical conditions that limit fat absorption
- Medical conditions that affect the intestines
- Obesity
- Gastric bypass surgery

## Signs of a lack of vitamin D:

- Fatigue
- Muscle cramps, aches or weakness
- Bone and lower back pain
- Frequent illness
- Slow wound healing
- Hair loss in women
- Mood changes, including depression, anxiety and seasonal affective disorder

Your provider can order a blood test to measure your vitamin D levels.

## Sunlight

**Most people need to spend 15-20 minutes in unfiltered sunlight three days a week for their body to produce vitamin D.**

However, the amount of vitamin D produced by sunlight exposure can vary greatly from person to person. Cloudy days, shade and having dark-colored skin also cut down on the amount of vitamin D the skin makes. Younger, fair-skinned people convert sunshine into vitamin D far better than those who are darker-skinned and over 50.

Exposure to sunlight is a risk for skin cancer. More than a few minutes in the sun without sunscreen is not recommended. Which makes getting adequate sunlight for vitamin D production tricky.

## Food

**Vitamin D isn't found naturally in many foods**, but you can get it from fortified dairy products and juices, fortified cereal, egg yolks, tofu, almonds and fatty fish, such as salmon, tuna, mackerel and sardines.

## Medications

**Vitamin D levels can be lowered by some medications**, so make sure your provider knows about all prescriptions, over-the-counter drugs and supplements you take. Talk with your provider before taking vitamin D supplements.

CLICK THE LINK TO TAKE A SHORT QUIZ TO PROVE COMPLETION:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RF99V5V>

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