



Getting the balance right— a complicated message

Healthy adults, who are 'out and about' and physically active outdoors are unlikely to lack vitamin D.

- **Between September and April** be SunSmart, *especially* between 10 am and 4 pm. A daily walk or some other form of outdoor physical activity in the early morning or late afternoon is recommended.
- **Between May and August** some sun on your skin outdoors is important so your body can make vitamin D. A daily walk or another form of outdoor physical activity in the hours around noon, with face, arms and hands in the sun, is recommended.
- Be SunSmart at any time of the year when you are outside in the mountains and/or near snow and ice.
- Be SunSmart by other shiny surfaces such as water and sand.

Three groups are at risk of lacking in vitamin D and poor bone health. These three groups may need year-round vitamin D supplementation (taking a vitamin D tablet). The three groups are:

1. people with naturally very dark skin—this includes many people from Africa, the Indian subcontinent and the Middle East, especially if they are covered by veils and full-body-coverage clothing
2. people who must avoid sun exposure because they have had skin cancer; or are on medication which makes their skin very sensitive to the sun
3. people who can't move about easily, who are frail; or are housebound.

Other people who may be lacking enough vitamin D between May and August include:

- people who live in the southern regions **and** spend little time outdoors in the middle of the day **between May and August**.

Talk to your GP about taking a vitamin D tablet if you think you might not be getting enough vitamin D.

There are other risk factors for not getting enough vitamin D. These risk factors include:

- Maori ethnicity
- Pacific ethnicity
- aged over 70 years
- obesity
- some medical conditions, and/or
- people on some medications.

A combination of these risk factors and/or limited exposure to the sun may result in the need to take a vitamin D tablet. Talk to your GP if you think you have **more than one** of the listed risk factors.

The vitamin D tablet

This tablet needs to be prescribed by your GP. It is a registered medicine which is safe for New Zealand consumers. Non-prescribed vitamin D supplements are not recommended as they may not be safe and will be more expensive.

Being active

Being active every day in sunlight will help you maintain healthy vitamin D levels. Be SunSmart between September and April.

Sunbeds (solaria)

- Do not use sun beds because they increase your risk of melanoma and other types of skin cancer.
- The risk increases if you use sunbeds often.
- The risk increases if you use sunbeds when you are young.
- Sunbeds cause skin cancer.