

Vitamin D ... Calcium's Important Partner

Vitamin D helps our body absorb calcium. Vitamin D is produced by our skin in the sunlight, however in Canada, because the sun is not strong enough, this does not happen between the months of October and March. Everyone over the age of 19 years (unless they drink a lot of milk or eat large portions of fish every day) should take a supplement during these months.

What foods contain Vitamin D?

The following chart includes common portions of foods that contain vitamin D. Other foods contain vitamin D, but not in significant amounts. Follow steps 1—3 below to see how much vitamin D you consume, and make plans to improve your intake if necessary.

1. Calculate your Vitamin D intake

Vitamin D is measured in “international units: (IU). Use this chart to calculate the amount of vitamin D you get through diet.

Vitamin D Containing Foods	Portion Size	IU Per Portion ¹
Milk (skim, 1%, 2%, whole, choc)	8 ounces (250ml)	107 (average)
Fortified rice & soy beverages	8 ounces (250ml)	88
Herring	1 piece 2"x1"x1/2" (12g)	81
Herring, smoked (kippered)	1 fillet 4"x2"x1 1/2" (37g)	32
Mackerel, baked	3 1/2 oz (100g)	106
Sardines, canned	1- 5" fish (38g)	182
Salmon, canned, pink or red	1/2 can (average can-190g)	710 (average)
Salmon, baked	3 1/2 oz (100g)	600 (average)
Tuna, canned	1/2 can (average can-170g)	50 (average)

¹Canadian Nutrient File, 2005

2. Do you get enough vitamin D?

Refer to the chart below. Compare your dietary intake of vitamin D to the recommended daily amount. Did you consume enough? If not, look at the “Ideas For Action”.

Recommended Daily Intake for Vitamin D	
Age	Adequate Daily Intake (males & females)
1—18 years	200IU ²
19—50 years	400IU ²
51 years and over	800 IU ³
Pregnant or breast feeding women 18 years and older	400 IU ³

Do not exceed the upper limit of 2000IU² per day from food and supplements.
²National Academy of Sciences, 1997 ³Osteoporosis Canada, 2002

3. Ideas for Action

Look for a change that is easy to make.

- Have fish that is high in vitamin D more often—in a sandwich, a wrap or a salad.
- Drink milk more often and increase both calcium and vitamin D at the same time.
- Take a Vitamin D supplement. They are available in 400IU and 1000IU tablets.