

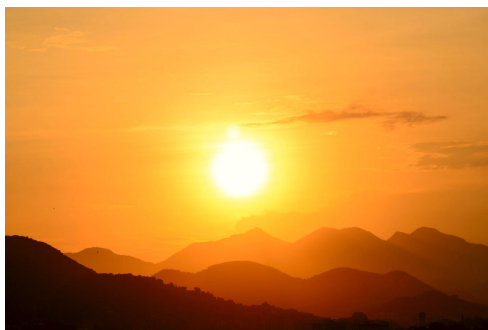
Vitamin D: The Sunshine Vitamin

Are you familiar with Vitamin D? As a Minnesotan, it helps for this essential vitamin to be on our radars! That's because Vitamin D can be produced in our bodies if we get enough exposure to sunlight - and during long Minnesota winters, we don't get enough of it from the sun alone.

The sun exposure that helps us produce Vitamin D grinds to a halt in winter, because the angle of the sun is lower in the sky. That means the sun's rays aren't strong enough to produce the amount of sunlight we need to get adequate Vitamin D. During summer months, as little as 15 minutes of sun exposure on our arms and legs 1-2 times a week may be enough. The amount of sunlight you need varies based on your skin tone. From November through March, though, no amount of time outside in Minnesota will provide enough sunlight.

What can we do to make sure we get enough Vitamin D? The good news is that Vitamin D is found in some foods. It naturally occurs in salmon, tuna, egg yolks, and beef liver. There are also other foods fortified with Vitamin D like milk, cereal, and certain orange juices. It helps to read the nutrition label if you're not sure how much Vitamin D is in your food! Vitamin D can also be taken as a supplement, which is a great option if the foods above don't appeal to you. As always, it's best to consult with your doctor before starting any new supplements.

So why do we need Vitamin D? It helps us absorb calcium from foods in our stomachs, it can help prevent osteomalacia (softening of our bones) and osteoporosis (weakening of our bones), and can also help prevent inflammation. Adults over 70 are at a higher risk for Vitamin D deficiency, and the Recommended Daily Allowance is higher for you if you fall into that age group. Not everyone needs to get their Vitamin D levels tested, but if you are concerned, it never hurts to ask!



Sources:

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