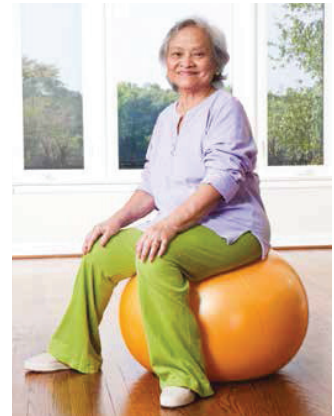


Why vitamin D is important



- Vitamin D can help maintain bone health, improve muscle function and may reduce falls in older people with low vitamin D levels
- If you keep your muscles and bones in good condition, you are less likely to fall and injure yourself when you're older
- Many older people do not always get enough vitamin D.



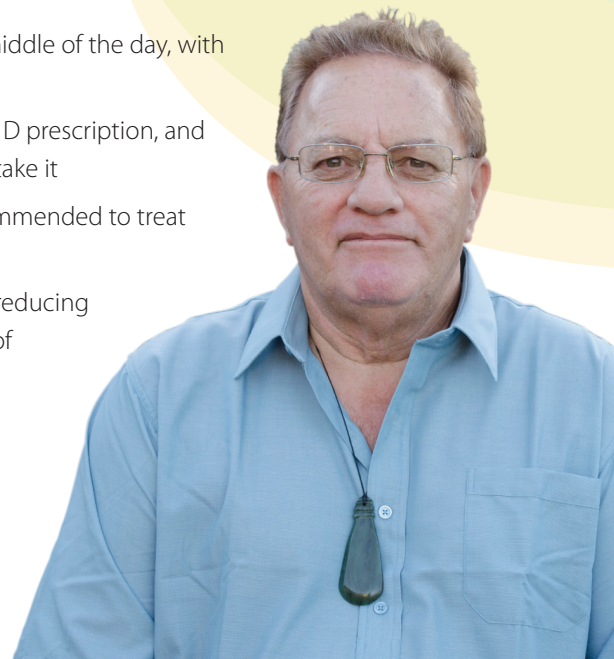
How do you get vitamin D?

- For most people, the main source of vitamin D is through the action of direct sunlight on uncovered skin
- Note: Sunlight directly on the skin is important - sunlight through glass doesn't work, as glass blocks out the ultraviolet B rays needed to make vitamin D
- Vitamin D can also be prescribed for people at high risk of vitamin D deficiency
- A few foods contain small amounts of vitamin D e.g. oily fish, but it is hard to get enough vitamin D from food alone.

Health practitioners* are best to assess if you need a prescription for vitamin D

- Your health practitioner may suggest that you spend more time in the sun to increase your vitamin D
 - From September to April, take a walk or do outside activities in the early morning or late afternoon. Remember to be SunSmart through the middle of the day
 - From May to August, take a walk or do outside activities in the middle of the day, with your face, arms and hands uncovered
- Your health practitioner will also assess whether you need a vitamin D prescription, and check if you have any health conditions which mean you shouldn't take it
- Multi-vitamins and vitamin D bought over the counter are not recommended to treat vitamin D deficiency
- Prescribed vitamin D is widely recommended around the world for reducing falls and fall related injuries in older people who are at a higher risk of vitamin D deficiency.

* Note that in addition to doctors, dieticians, pharmacists and nurse practitioners who have met the relevant regulatory requirements for prescribing can prescribe vitamin D.



Are you getting enough vitamin D?

- Do you spend little time outside in the sun?
- When outside do you cover up for cultural, medical or other reasons?
- Do you have naturally very dark skin?
- Are you living in a rest home?

If you are over 65 and can say yes to any of the above, check with your health practitioner to see if a vitamin D prescription is right for you.



Want to know more about vitamin D?

ACC, District Health Boards and Primary Health Organisations across the country encourage the provision of prescribed vitamin D to older people in rest homes.

ACC and the Health Quality & Safety Commission are working together to make sure that older people who are at high risk of vitamin D deficiency, get vitamin D prescriptions if they need them.

The Ministry of Health and Cancer Society of NZ have developed the Consensus Statement on vitamin D and sun exposure in New Zealand (2012).

Here are some useful websites with resources on vitamin D, sensible sun exposure, and falls:

- ACC's website www.acc.co.nz/vitamin-d
- The Medsafe website www.medsafe.govt.nz
- The Cancer Society's website www.cancernz.org.nz
- Ministry of Health website www.health.govt.nz

www.acc.co.nz

0800 844 657



newzealand.govt.nz