



Delectable D: The Sunshine Vitamin

Our bodies rely on vitamins for normal cell function, growth and development. Of the thirteen classified vitamins, only vitamin D is produced by our body, and unlike the other 12 vitamins that can be found in a variety of whole foods such as fruits, vegetables and whole grains, vitamin D is found naturally in only a handful of foods.

Vitamin D is necessary for a healthy immune system, and also helps our bodies absorb calcium and phosphorus for strong teeth and bones.

Known as the “sunshine vitamin” vitamin D is made when our skin is exposed to the sun’s ultraviolet light. The Institute of Medicine of the National Academies recommend that children and most adults should get 600 IU of vitamin D each day, with those over age 70 aiming for 800 IU. Ten to 15 minutes of sunshine, three times a week, is usually sufficient to produce our requirement of vitamin D in summer, or year-round in southern regions.

But people who live in northern climates and are exposed to limited amounts of sunshine can boost their vitamin D levels by taking supplements – or better yet – by eating the following foods:

Fatty Seafood: Fish such as salmon, mackerel, herring and sardines are the best sources of D, providing 50 to as much as 550 IUs per serving.

Egg Yolk: A single egg provides about 6% of the daily recommended level of vitamin D.

Mushrooms: Choose varieties such as chanterelles, maitake, and morel which naturally contain the highest levels of vitamin D. Look for crimini and portobella mushrooms that have been exposed to ultraviolet light which increases their D level.*

Fortified Foods: These foods have vitamins added during their processing. Check the nutrition facts panel to know the exact amount of vitamin D in each serving. Foods that have been fortified with vitamin D include:

Fortified milk and dairy products. Most milk provides 100 IU per cup; yogurt and cheese are not routinely fortified but some brands may be.

Fortified cereals. Most standard servings provide 40-100 IU of vitamin D.

Fortified orange juice. Most brands add 100 IU per 8-ounce serving.

** All mushrooms contain vitamin D, but growers can increase the amount of vitamin D by exposing mushrooms to ultraviolet light. Similar to humans, mushrooms naturally produce vitamin D when exposed to sunlight or a sunlamp.*