



VITAMIN D DEFICIENCY

ARE YOU AT RISK?

Recommended sunlight exposure

	September– April	May–August
Length of Exposure	Minimum 5 minutes and maximum 15 minutes, twice a day	2 to 3 hours total over the week
Time of day	Before 10am or after 3pm	During sunny periods
Areas exposed	Face, arms and hands OR similar surface areas	Face, arms and hands OR similar surface areas
Sunscreen	Must wear sunscreen between 10am and 3pm, and re-apply hourly	Sun protection is not necessary during winter months

Sun protection

If you are outdoors for prolonged periods of time, have fair skin or other skin conditions, you may still need to use sunscreen outside the recommended hours.

To protect against skin damage when the UV Level* is rated Level 3 and above use a combination of five measures:

- > Shade
- > Wear clothing to cover skin
- > Wear a hat to protect face, ears and neck
- > Wear sunglasses – Australian standard 1067
- > Use SPF 30+ water resistant sunscreen, re-apply hourly.

* *Ultraviolet radiation (UV) level alerts are issued by the Bureau of Meteorology when the UV Index forecast for the day is Level 3 or above. UV Level 3 or above can cause sunburn and skin damage, which increases the risk of skin cancer. Sun protection is required on UV Level 3 or above days.*

Who can I contact?

If the information in this pamphlet has raised any concerns for you or any member of your family then speak to your local doctor, maternal and child health nurse or other health professional.

This pamphlet has been prepared by Dousta Galla Community Health Services and endorsed by the Moonee Valley Melbourne Primary Care Partnership vitamin D partners including Dousta Galla Community Health Service, Melbourne Health, Arthritis Victoria, Moonee Valley City Council, Melbourne City Council, Western Region Community Health Centre, Office of Housing, and Melbourne Division of General Practice.



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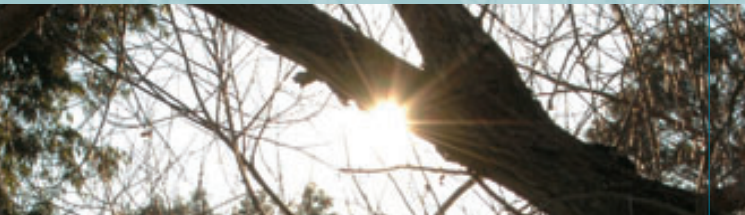
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Further reference:

- > Recommendations in this brochure have been obtained from the Risks and Benefits of Sun Exposure Position Statement – Approved by the Australian and New Zealand Bone and Mineral Society, Osteoporosis Australia, Australasian College of Dermatologists and the Cancer Council of Australia, 2005, and is restricted to the state of Victoria.
- > Osteoporosis Australia, www.osteoporosis.org.au



WHERE IS VITAMIN D FOUND?



Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium from the diet.

Most of our vitamin D comes from direct sunlight hitting our skin. A very small amount comes from certain foods.

Most people achieve adequate levels of vitamin D through exposure to sunlight during typical day-to-day outdoor activities.

There are small amounts of vitamin D present in foods such as milk, soy drinks, margarine, eggs, liver and fish (tuna, salmon, sardines, herring and mackerel).

However, dietary intake of these foods is not sufficient to maintain adequate levels of vitamin D.



Why do you need vitamin D?

- > For the development of healthy bones, muscles and teeth
- > To prevent rickets (soft and weakened bones) in children
- > To help prevent osteoporosis (loss of bone density leading to bone fractures) in adults
- > To prevent falls by older people through improving muscle strength and balance.

Who is at risk of vitamin D deficiency?

Those at risk include:

- > Children with low sunlight exposure
- > Adults with low sunlight exposure
- > People who cover most of their body
- > People unable to regularly get out of their house
- > People with dark skin
- > People in residential care
- > Frail older people
- > Shift workers
- > People with some medical conditions (eg. some bowel diseases).

What can you do about vitamin D deficiency?

- > Maintain adequate sun exposure to the face, arms, hands or similar surface area
- > If you are at risk, visit your family doctor for a blood test
- > If you are at risk, ensure you have regular follow-ups with your family doctor
- > Take vitamin D supplements if advised by your family doctor
- > Ensure you have a well balanced diet
- > Consume enough calcium in your diet and exercise moderately each day to maintain healthy bones.

Note: Medical research indicates that people with dark skin need longer periods of exposure to sunlight to achieve sufficient levels of vitamin D than those highlighted in the table overleaf. Exposure times for people with very dark skin would be three to four times greater.

The information in this pamphlet does not apply to people with medical conditions or those taking medications that increase their risk of skin cancer.

For further information, please consult your family doctor.