



## About Vitamin D

Feeling good since spending time in the summer sun? It's likely the vitamin D made by your skin on exposure to UV rays has made you feel this way. The international medical literature estimates the world's vitamin D deficiency rate to be around 50%.

### So should you worry?

Vitamin D is not actually a vitamin but a steroid hormone and is important for all tissues in the body. We know that there are vitamin D receptors in bone, skeletal muscle, immune cells, brain, prostate, breast, colon and other tissues.

Apart from the sun there are only miniscule amounts to be had in fortified foods, cod liver oil, oily fish and milk.

### First you need to know why vitamin D is important.

- Optimising vitamin D levels reduces all causes of mortality and heart attack by 26%.
- It also reduces incidences of high blood pressure, breast cancer, auto-immune diseases like rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes, depression and multiple sclerosis.

I have cured patients' chronic pain conditions just by getting their vitamin D levels up to normal.

Adequate vitamin D helps chronic pain conditions, migraine and persistent non-specific muscular pain. It also prevents blood clots and protects the brain against Parkinson's disease. What is quite interesting is that adequate vitamin D prevents falls in the elderly by 22% – this is done by preventing swaying and also by enhancing muscular support. It also helps to prevent Caesarean section birth due to improved muscular performance in labour.

In New Zealand, in one Wellington Union clinic, the vitamin D deficiency rate in pregnant women averaged 83%. We are now seeing children with rickets in this country. Experts believe this problem has been caused by the immigration of dark skinned people to more temperate climates where, in addition to this, they conduct indoor lives.

Even people with pale skin are becoming deficient in vitamin D these days, not only because of their indoor lives but because we have also been warned about the dangers of excessive sun exposure. We now have a dilemma because we don't want to get skin cancer but we are deficient in vitamin D. The answer to this is to take the stuff. If you think that you are at higher risk, you should ask your doctor for a blood test. Your doctor will discuss this with you.

In the meantime, if you have pale skin, you can go out into the midday sun for 10 minutes. If you have darker skin, you can tolerate this level of UV for longer. You can consider taking cod liver oil during the winter and you can go on a sunny winter holiday too, which will do you a great deal of good.

Those at a higher risk of being vitamin D deficient are diabetics and smokers (because nicotine reduces vitamin D levels), overweight people (because vitamin D gets trapped in the fat), people with epilepsy and those suffering kidney disease. Elderly people and babies who have not been breastfed are also more likely to be deficient. So go and do something about what is more than likely to be your own Vitamin D deficiency!