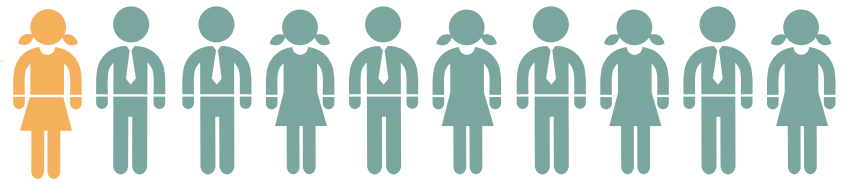


Vitamin D tests

Most people don't need to be tested for vitamin D deficiency.



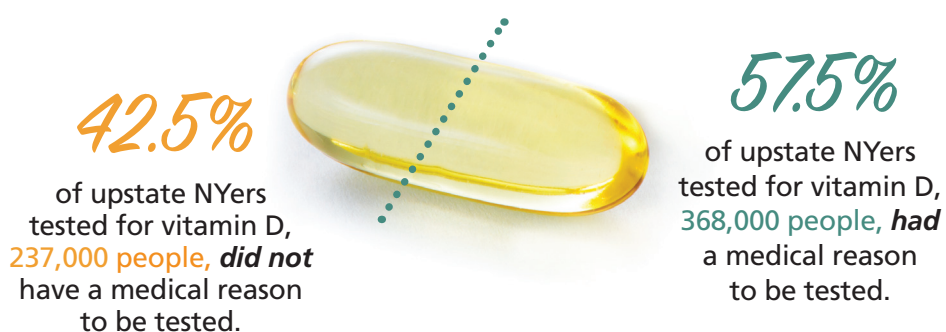
Only **1 in 10** upstate New Yorkers has a medical reason to be tested.

These individuals are at high risk for vitamin D deficiency. They may suffer from osteoporosis or osteomalacia, or have a syndrome that keeps them from absorbing enough vitamin D.

Why did testing for vitamin D become so popular?

Vitamin D is essential to bone health and has been proven to prevent osteomalacia and rickets. Previous research studies linked vitamin D deficiency to many serious conditions like heart disease and cancer, so patients and physicians started demanding more tests. However, more recent studies have shown that research to be flawed and this has caused the medical community to begin questioning the need for so many vitamin D tests.

641,000 upstate NYers had a vitamin D test in 2014 costing an estimated **\$33 million**.



For **9 in 10** upstate NYers, vitamin D testing has no proven benefit. Here's why:

► The test won't change the treatment.



If you don't have a medical reason to be tested but you're concerned about low vitamin D levels, you can take a supplement or eat more vitamin D-rich foods. The treatment options won't change if a test finds that you do have a deficiency.

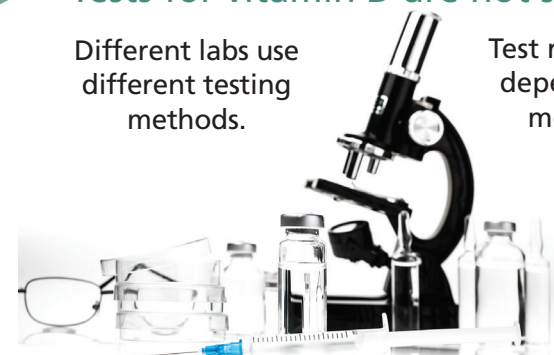
► Optimal levels of vitamin D vary from person to person.

Those who are obese or who have darker skin tend to have lower vitamin D levels. But there's no proof that the lower levels hurt their health.

► Tests for vitamin D are not standardized

Different labs use different testing methods.

Test results can vary depending on the method used.



Sources of vitamin D



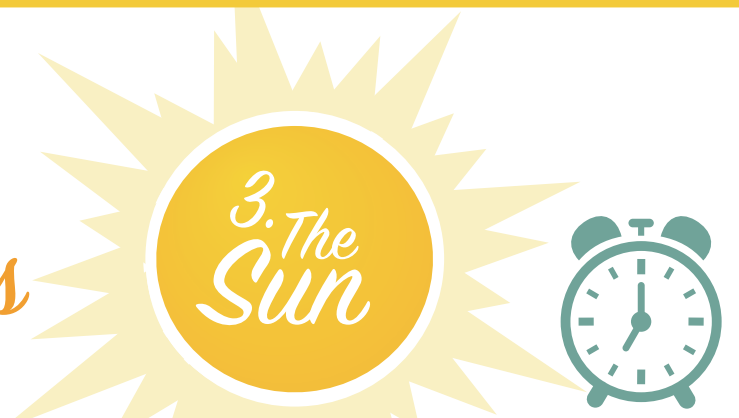
1. Dietary intake
Foods fortified with vitamin D, such as milk, cereal and orange juice, provide an extra source of vitamin D.

2. Vitamin D supplements

Vitamin D supplements come in two different forms:

D2 + **D3**
(ergocalciferol) (cholecalciferol)

The two different types of supplements increase vitamin D levels in the blood. Like most dietary supplements, vitamin D can interact or interfere with other medicines or supplements, so talk to your health care provider before taking one.

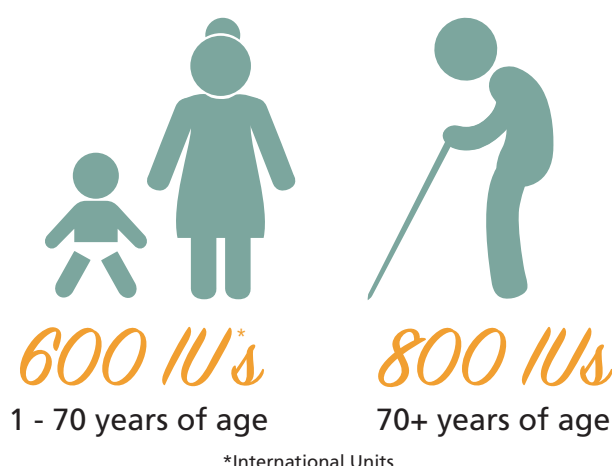


3. The Sun

Sun exposure helps the skin produce vitamin D. Studies show being outside on a sunny day for **5 to 30 minutes twice a week** in the spring, summer and fall is sufficient to produce all the vitamin D your body needs throughout the year.

BUT sun exposure to prevent vitamin D deficiency is **NOT RECOMMENDED** by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force because it increases the risk for skin cancer associated with UVB radiation.

Recommended daily intake of vitamin D (through food and/or supplements)



Foods containing vitamin D



Cod liver oil, 1 tablespoon
1,360 IU's
PER SERVING



Salmon (sockeye), cooked, 3 ounces
447 IU's
PER SERVING



Milk, vitamin D-fortified, 1 cup
112 IU's
PER SERVING



Tuna fish, canned in water, drained, 3 ounces
45 IU's
PER SERVING



Egg, 1 large (vitamin D is found in yolk)
41 IU's
PER SERVING



Cheese, Swiss, 1 ounce
6 IU's
PER SERVING

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force says:

"Current evidence is insufficient to assess the balance of benefits and harms of screening for vitamin D deficiency in asymptomatic adults."

The American Society of Clinical Pathology which participates in Choosing Wisely™, an initiative of the ABIM Foundation, says:

"Many people have low levels of vitamin D, but few have seriously low levels. Most of us don't need a vitamin D test. We just need to make simple changes so we get enough vitamin D."

Talk to your doctor about what's best for you. Visit <http://consumerhealthchoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/ChoosingWiselyVitaminDASCP-ER.pdf> for information about Choosing Wisely from Consumer Reports.

Sources:
Harvard School of Public Health <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/vitamin-d/>
The Mayo Clinic <http://www.mayoclinic.org/drugs-supplements/vitamin-d/background/hrb-20060400>
Choosing Wisely | An Initiative of the ABIM Foundation <http://www.choosingwisely.org/patient-resources/vitamin-d-tests/>
National Institutes of Health <http://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/VitaminD-HealthProfessional/>
Food and Drug Administration <http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm118079.htm>
U.S. Preventive Services Task Force <http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/Page/Document/RecommendationStatementFinal/vitamin-d-deficiency-screening>
Data Source:
Vitamin D testing prevalence among 1.65 million Excellus BlueCross BlueShield members was extrapolated by age using Census data to reflect the upstate New York population.
B-XXXX / 9574-15CC