

Managing Low Vitamin D Levels

Has your doctor told you that your vitamin D levels are low? Don't worry, you're not alone! Around a quarter of Australians currently have low levels of vitamin D¹.

Vitamin D, also known as the sunshine vitamin, helps the body to absorb calcium and that's why it's important. Without vitamin D, we cannot build strong bones and teeth. Vitamin D also helps to support our immunity.

Where do I get Vitamin D?

For most Australians, the main source of vitamin D is from the sun. Vitamin D is made in the body when our skin is exposed to the UV rays from the sun. This vitamin D is then sent to the liver where it is "turned on" and can start being used by the body. Sometimes vitamin D levels can drop, usually during the colder months when the days are shorter. Vitamin D can also be found in food, but only in foods that contain fat.

How much vitamin D do I need?²

Adults: 200 IU per day (ages 19-50 years)
400-600 IU per day (ages 51+ years)

Children: 200 IU per day

Common sources of vitamin D:

1 International Unit (IU) = 0.025 micrograms

100g tuna
(or other fatty fish)



70 IU

1 teaspoon of
cod liver oil



450 IU

2 teaspoons (10g)
of margarine



40 IU

2 eggs



85 IU

2/3 cup of vitamin D
fortified cereal



40 IU

Serving sizes adapted from the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating, 2013.
New Zealand serving sizes will be similar.

Did you know?

Vitamin D is a fat-soluble vitamin. What this means is that vitamin D can only be stored in foods that contain fat.



Mushrooms are extra special

Mushrooms are the only vegetable and non-fat food that contains vitamin D. This is because their skin acts similar to our skin and produces vitamin D when exposed to sunlight. Eating 75g of raw mushrooms that have been exposed to UV sunlight can provide you with almost 850 IU of vitamin D!³



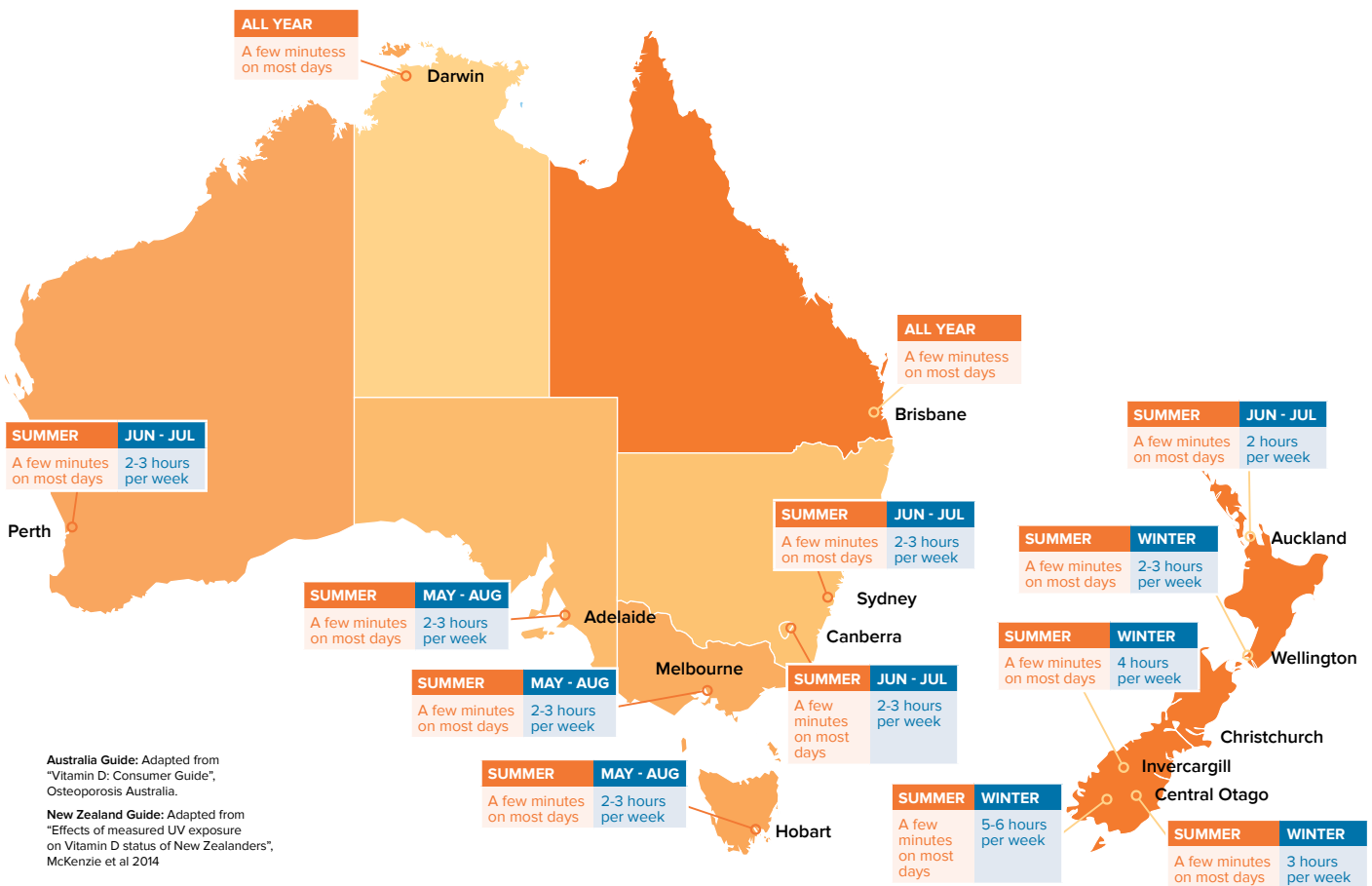
Location, Location, Location

We can all get our vitamin D from the sun, but it requires some time and effort to get it all. The amount of time you need to spend in the sun will depend on where you live, your skin colour and your age. Take a look at the maps below to understand what's recommended for your city or state⁴.

We know that sun exposure for too long without protection is not good for our skin and so to compensate supplement with foods that are rich in Vitamin D.

Quick Tips:

- Try to eat your lunch in the sun or take a walk around the block
- Start the day with a breakfast cereal fortified with vitamin D
- Eat fatty fish, eggs or margarine a few times a week as these contain high levels of vitamin D. Did you know that all margarines sold in Australia are fortified with vitamin D?
- Take a vitamin D supplement if recommended by your GP



Your Health Professional Recommends

Vitamin D levels can take months to show any changes. Discuss with your GP an appropriate plan for testing your vitamin D levels.

1 ABS . Vitamin D 2014, cat. no. 4364.0.55.006, ABS; Canberra.
 2 NHMRC. Nutrient Reference Values for Australia and New Zealand 2005, Canberra.
 3 US Department of Agriculture. *USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference*. Release 28. Version: Sept 2015
 4 Kennel, K et al. Mayo Clinic Proceedings 2010; 85(8): 752-758

Disclaimer: These fact sheets are not meant to replace dietary advice provided by your doctor or dietitian. Please consult with your doctor or dietitian before making changes to your diet or physical activity routine.

