

The Vitamin D Dose Check

The tolerable upper intake level for vitamin D in adults is 4,000 IU a day from all sources combined. A very common bottle on the shelf says 5,000 IU, one capsule daily. This sheet is the arithmetic, the blood test, and the questions to bring to your provider.

The three numbers

- Recommended daily amount: 600 IU for adults aged 19 to 70, and 800 IU from 71 onward.
- Tolerable upper intake level: 4,000 IU a day for everyone aged 19 and over. This total includes food, fortified drinks and every supplement together.
- A 2,000 IU capsule clears the requirement with margin and leaves room under the ceiling for what you already get elsewhere.

The blood test that turns a guess into a dose

The measure is 25-hydroxyvitamin D and it is a routine blood draw. Levels of 20 ng/mL and above are adequate for most people for bone and overall health. Below 12 ng/mL is too low. Above 50 ng/mL is too high and may cause problems of its own. Roughly one adult in four in the United States sits in the low or inadequate range.

Where the vitamin D you already take is hiding

- Your multivitamin, which often contains a meaningful dose you have stopped noticing.
- Calcium combination products, which frequently include vitamin D.
- Fortified milk and plant milks, at roughly 120 IU per cup, plus some cereals, juices and yogurts.

Who genuinely needs more

- Older adults, whose skin makes less vitamin D from sunlight.
- People with darker skin, and anyone who rarely gets sun on bare skin.
- People with conditions that limit fat absorption, such as Crohn's disease, celiac disease or ulcerative colitis.
- People with obesity or a history of gastric bypass surgery.

What happens if you guess upward for too long

Blood levels above 150 ng/mL can cause nausea, vomiting, muscle weakness, confusion, excessive thirst and urination, and kidney stones. Extreme levels can cause kidney failure and irregular heartbeat. High levels are almost always caused by supplements rather than by sun or food, because your skin limits its own production.

Medicines to check first

- Orlistat, which reduces how much vitamin D you absorb.
- Statins, which may work less well alongside high dose vitamin D.
- Steroids such as prednisone, which can lower your blood level of vitamin D.
- Thiazide diuretics, which combined with vitamin D could raise blood calcium too high.

Four questions for your provider

- Can I have the 25-hydroxyvitamin D test, and what was my number?
- Adding up everything I take, where do I land against the 4,000 IU ceiling?
- Do any of my current medicines interact with a daily vitamin D dose?
- If I am deficient, what is the correction dose, how long am I on it, and when do we retest?

Sources: NIH Office of Dietary Supplements vitamin D fact sheets for consumers and health professionals, MedlinePlus, and StatPearls via the NCBI Bookshelf. Every claim in the article this sheet accompanies links to its source. Ageless Coach. Age Strong. Live Long. This is education, not medical advice. A clinician may deliberately prescribe above the upper limit to correct a documented deficiency.