

THE VITAMIN YOU SHOULD BE TAKING

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Vitamins—their purposes, roles, and needs were the focus of many discussions this year. This was largely due to mainstream media articles and a few studies suggesting that vitamin supplements aren't necessary for *all* individuals. **Disclaimer: this statement is true.** Not everyone needs to take a multivitamin; you may not be deficient in a nutrient if you're eating a variety of foods in adequate portions.

Having said this, there is one non-negotiable supplement, and that my friends is **vitamin D**. Also known as the sunshine vitamin, vitamin D can actually be made in our skin when we are exposed to sunlight. We can also source vitamin D from a few food sources, such as in fortified milk, fish, and to a lesser extent, eggs and mushrooms. A quick fact: to get enough vitamin D from milk, you would need to drink 10 cups per day. Idealistic? *Sure*. Realistic? *Unlikely*.

Because of its' poor bioavailability in foods, we run the risk of being vitamin D deficient. Furthermore, when you live in a city affectionately called "Winterpeg" it can be difficult to make vitamin D subcutaneously because we're often bundled up in the spring, fall, and winter months. According to research, Canadians actually produce zero vitamin D between October and May. And, if you're wearing sunscreen in the summer months you're also less likely to be producing vitamin D.

There's so much fuss about it, but do I really need vitamin D?

It plays a key role in helping our bodies absorb and utilize calcium. As a result, we can help maintain healthy bones, muscles, and teeth by having a-okay stores of vitamin D. Beyond this, new research is showing that the human body has evolved with more receptors for vitamin D. Increasingly, there is substantial evidence that vitamin D can improve our immune health, prevent certain forms of cancer, fight inflammation, and even promote better mental health.

So what's the point?

It's virtually **impossible** to get enough vitamin D from food alone. Consider taking a single vitamin D₃ supplement. I typically recommend my clients take between 1000 – 2000IU daily depending on their intake of other vitamin D containing foods. This recommendation applies to anyone I see over the age of one (so, basically everyone!). If you or a family member is not a 'pill person,' talk to your pharmacist about a liquid or chewable version of vitamin D which is readily available.

Can I overdo taking vitamin D?

Vitamin D supplements have no known side effects if they're taken at the appropriate dose. A dose of 4,000 IU/day is considered the tolerable highest dose a person can consume long-term without risk of adverse effects.