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DO YOU KNOW YOUR CURRENT VITAMIN D LEVEL?

(i.e. measured in the last 6 months)

If you don't, be sure you check this promptly by completing this short assessment to determine if you need to do a blood test. It could be the key to solving your health problems and even save your life. Mounting scientific evidence confirms that vitamin D is one of the most potent health-boosting substances and is vital for health, and there is sufficient evidence to conclude that vitamin D is indeed essential for survival. From clinical experience, around 95% of people are found to be deficient (particularly office workers and elderly) and some have dangerously low levels. Not surprisingly, their low vitamin D status usually correlates with symptoms they have. Although very common, this issue can be relatively easily solved by increasing safe sun exposure and/or correct supplementation, tailored for each individual.

Why having high levels of vitamin D is so important?

Latest research indicates that vitamin D regulates over 900 gene signals in the body controlling many different tissues and cells. So far the research confirmed the following health benefits:

- Essential for immune system disorders, including cancers, infections, colds and flu
- Boosts mood, decreases depression and enhances cognitive performance
- Decreases/modulates pain anywhere in the body
- Prevents colon, prostate, breast, ovarian, and many other cancers
- Prevents and treats bone diseases such as osteoporosis. Essential to absorb calcium
- Prevents diabetes, helps with insulin secretion
- Vital for weight loss and dealing with obesity – as vitamin D levels drop waistlines and weight increase
- Higher levels of vitamin D are associated with higher levels of HDL cholesterol
- Low levels of Vitamin D are associated with fibromyalgia and autoimmune diseases
- Good levels of vitamin D prevent falls which are a major risk for fractures in elderly

Although regular sun exposure is the best and safest option, it is not always possible to get your vitamin D from sunshine, and quite difficult to get adequate amounts from your diet so for many people, a vitamin D supplement is a practical way to ensure adequate levels. Importantly, since a large body of science shows vitamin D works closely with calcium and magnesium, it is best to also asses their levels and supplement vitamin D in combination with appropriate, for each individual, amounts of calcium and magnesium to maintain a proper balance.

How to determine your vitamin D level?

Testing prior to any supplementation at higher doses (over 3,000IU per day) is imperative to establish how much vitamin D you need to reach good levels i.e. over 100nmol/L. Only at the optimal level can vitamin D exert its full health benefits. Chronic vitamin D deficiency takes time to be corrected and it could take 3-6 months to raise the levels beyond 100nmol/L, depending on the starting point. Supervised supplementation and close monitoring is absolutely vital to safely reaching higher levels and to avoid overdosing, which is also detrimental to health.

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Short self-assessment

Please fill in the short self-assessment below to determine if your vitamin D level is likely to be low. Select options below that apply to your circumstances.

RISK FACTORS

✓	Risk factor
	Low and infrequent sun exposure - spend very little time in the sun
	Working in the office, not having lunch breaks outside (15-30min per day in the sun depending on the season)
	Using sunscreen most of the time - sunscreen practically blocks skin synthesis of vitamin D
	Covering all exposed skin when outside
	Dark skin - people with darker skin have a reduced ability to synthesise vitamin D upon exposure to sunlight
	Some medical conditions including impaired liver function, inflammatory bowel disease (e.g. Crohn's disease), fat malabsorption syndromes
	Obesity increases the risk of vitamin D deficiency because obese individuals cannot easily access the vitamin D stored in body fat
	Cigarettes smoking
	Aged over 60 – the ability to synthesise vitamin D declines with age

If you selected more than two risk factors above you are likely to be deficient

DEFICIENCY SYMPTOMS

✓	Symptom
	Muscle aches / pain including low back pain
	Pain in pelvis, back and legs
	Regular bone pain or tenderness e.g. from applying thumb pressure to sternum or shinbone
	Muscle weakness
	Symptoms are worse in winter – more pain and/or lower mood or depression
	Low bone density (as measured by a medical test)
	One or more of the following – loss of height, low bone density, prone to fractures, an autoimmune disease (MS, Crohn's disease, thyroid abnormalities) or high blood pressure
	Feeling heaviness in the legs
	Low immunity – frequent colds in autumn/winter

If you selected more than two symptoms above (especially out of the first four) you are likely to be deficient

If you have concerns about your vitamin D level and would like to discuss them with a health practitioner, please contact Joanna Sochan, Naturopath, Herbalist and Nutritionist to arrange a consultation.

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