



Vitamin D for athletes

Vitamin D is important for every person's health. Even more important for athletes. Vitamin D, along with calcium, plays a role in bone health but also contributes to the immune system, brain, and heart health. A low Vitamin D may also play a part in Seasonal Affective Disorder and other mental health issues.

Vitamin D may decrease the severity of those with COVID infection. (It does not prevent getting infected)

We get Vitamin D from sunlight as well as some foods- mostly seafoods. The American diet doesn't have a lot of options that offer Vitamin D- so in the winter, when exposure to sunlight is less, a supplement might be considered.

Those at risk for a low Vitamin D include dark skinned people, those that live north of Oklahoma City during the winter, those with a history of a low vitamin D level, those getting minimal sun exposure, and those that have a history of repetitive stress fractures or bone injury.

Labs can document a low vitamin D level if your health care provider believes necessary.

In the summer- 10 minutes of sunlight per day (and then putting on sunscreen to prevent skin damage and the risk for skin cancer) allows enough Vitamin D for most people.

When you can't get enough sunlight (or it's wintertime)- Vitamin D supplements range from 600 IU to 5000 IU per day and in some cases up to 50,000 IU per week.

Teenagers might consider Vitamin D3 (1000-4000 IU per day) during the winter or in cases that may benefit from supplementation.

Discuss this with your health care provider.

Calcium is also important, but easier to get in the American diet- including milk (8 ounces of milk has 300mg of calcium), ice cream, some vegetables, and calcium fortified juices. Too much calcium can be dangerous- with research suggesting calcium deposits in the blood stream may occur with too much. **Calcium 1300mg per day is the most a teenager should get-** including food and any supplements.

Who shouldn't take extra calcium or vitamin D? People with a history of kidney disease including kidney stones shouldn't take Calcium or Vitamin D until discussing with their health care provider.