

CDA POSITION STATEMENT

Safe and Effective Ways to Maintain Adequate Levels of Vitamin D

Vitamin D is a fat-soluble vitamin, which is involved in calcium absorption, bone health and maintenance and control of cell growth. Canadians have two options to maintain vitamin D levels: oral intake and sun exposure. To obtain sufficient vitamin D levels, there is no need to increase sun exposure. Oral vitamin D intake through vitamin supplements or diet is the optimal and safest way to maintain adequate levels. Vitamin D rich foods include oily fish such as salmon, trout, sardines, herring, mackerel, tuna, as well as cod liver oil, oysters, liver, and egg yolks. Vitamin D is also available in fortified foods such as some dairy products including milk, soy milk, as well as orange juice and cereals.

While sunlight can be a significant source of vitamin D during the summer months, it is usually an insufficient method to maintain adequate levels throughout the year for many Canadians. Therefore, dietary sources and supplementation are usually necessary and a more reliable method, especially during the winter months, to ensure optimal vitamin D levels. The recommended dose for neonates and infants is 400- 600 IU/day, for children and adolescents 600- 1000 IU/day and for adults 800-2000 IU/day.

Canadians should not plan to maintain adequate vitamin D levels through excessive sun exposure or use of indoor tanning due to the increased risk of developing skin cancer. Skin cancers, such as melanoma and squamous cell carcinoma, can be deadly. All forms of skin cancer require timely treatment, which can cause pain, scarring and disfigurement and sometimes death. Skin cancer affects approximately 1 in 6 Canadians and is largely preventable by limiting exposure to the sun, protecting the skin from UV radiation, and avoiding tanning beds.

In summary: Vitamin D is essential for your health. It is unsafe and unnecessary to increase sun exposure in order to maintain vitamin D levels. A diet with vitamin D rich food, and vitamin D supplements are safer and preferred.

Released April 29, 2024

Established in 1925, the Canadian Dermatology Association (CDA) is a member organization that advocates for dermatologists across Canada, underscoring their essential role in the healthcare system. As a community of Certified Dermatologists, we are dedicated to advancing the science of dermatology encompassing over 3000 skin, hair and nail conditions. Our commitment extends beyond professional support; we also protect and educate the public through comprehensive educational initiatives and our product recognition program.

