

For more information please visit:

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/refugee/index.html>

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/nutrition/>



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The Importance of Vitamin D and Calcium

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WHAT IS VITAMIN D?

Vitamin D is important for bones, teeth, and muscle development. The best way to get Vitamin D is by eating fish or taking fish oil, and it is also found in milk and eggs. Most people get their Vitamin D from exposure to sunlight on a daily basis. If you do not get the proper amount of sunlight and foods rich in Vitamin D, your bones may not be healthy.

WHAT IS VITAMIN D DEFICIENCY?

Vitamin D Deficiency is when you are not getting enough Vitamin D in your body. This happens when you are not exposed to enough sunlight or you are not eating enough foods that have Vitamin D. Vitamin D Deficiency can make you sick and cause harmful diseases, such as Rickets, Osteomalacia, Osteoporosis, and joint pain.

Rickets is the softening and weakening of bones leading to deformity and breaks in the bones. This often occurs in children.

Osteomalacia is an adult version of Rickets, resulting in the softening and weakening of bones.

Osteoporosis is a disease in which bones become fragile and very likely to break.

WHO IS AT RISK FOR VITAMIN D DEFICIENCY?

- People living in areas with little sunlight,

- women (especially those who cover most of their bodies)
- people who tend to stay indoors,
- people with dark skin
- the elderly.

HOW CAN I PREVENT VITAMIN D DEFICIENCY?

In states with longer winters and fewer hours of daylight, it is important to eat food high in Vitamin D. This is particularly important for people with darker skin. When your skin is darker, it is harder for your body to get Vitamin D from the sunlight.

Eat Foods with Vitamin D such as:

- cod liver oil,
- fish,
- milk
- margarine, butter, cheese
- eggs.

It is also good to spend time outdoors. While it is difficult to be outside if it is cold and dark, there are other ways to get your Vitamin D. These include taking Vitamin D supplements.

SHOULD I TAKE A SUPPLEMENT?

Vitamin D supplements are the best way to get your dose of Vitamin D. Eating foods with Vitamin D and drinking milk may not provide enough Vitamin D needed for the day. Vitamin D supplements can be bought at most drug stores, food stores, and health

food stores. For prevention of Vitamin D Deficiency, adults should take between 400 and 800 International Units (IU) per day, and children should take 400 IU per day.

VITAMIN D AND CALCIUM

Vitamin D and Calcium work together to build strong bones. Calcium helps your heart and muscles work well and may prevent high blood pressure. Calcium also keeps your bones and teeth strong and prevents bone diseases.

Vitamin D and Calcium are found in milk. Milk in the U.S. may taste different from milk at home. If you do not like drinking milk, there are other ways to get your daily intake of calcium:

- yogurt or frozen yogurt
- cheese
- ice cream
- puddings and custards
- milkshakes