



Vitamin D Supplements Are Harmful — Sunshine and Food Determine Health

Worries over vitamin D, once known as "the sunshine vitamin," have turned hundreds of millions of people into patients with worse, not better, health. The latest, and likely the final, [analyses](#) of the studies performed on treating people with vitamin D supplements has shown that this multiple billion-dollar business does not work. The authors, after thoroughly examining hundreds of research papers, conclude: "Our findings suggest that vitamin D supplementation with or without calcium does not reduce skeletal or non-skeletal outcomes in unselected community-dwelling individuals by more than 15%. Future trials with similar designs are unlikely to alter these conclusions."

Vitamin D supplements are so powerless that the benefits of supplements can only be seen at the extremes of need, such as with institutionalized elderly women (and even then the benefits are with a combination of vitamin D and calcium, not vitamin D alone). In other words, if grandma can be wheeled onto the outdoor patio several times a week, she will reduce her risk of fractures far beyond any benefits hoped for by adding pills or injections of vitamin D.

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Vitamin D Supplements Increase Broken Bones

[Two large randomized controlled trials](#) have shown an increased risk of fractures with annual high-dose vitamin D supplementation.

1) In the British "Wessex" study, 9,440 community-dwelling participants, aged 75–100 years, were randomly allocated to receive an annual injection of 300,000 IU vitamin D2 or matching placebo every autumn over three years. The vitamin D group showed an almost 50% increased risk of hip and leg (femur) fracture.

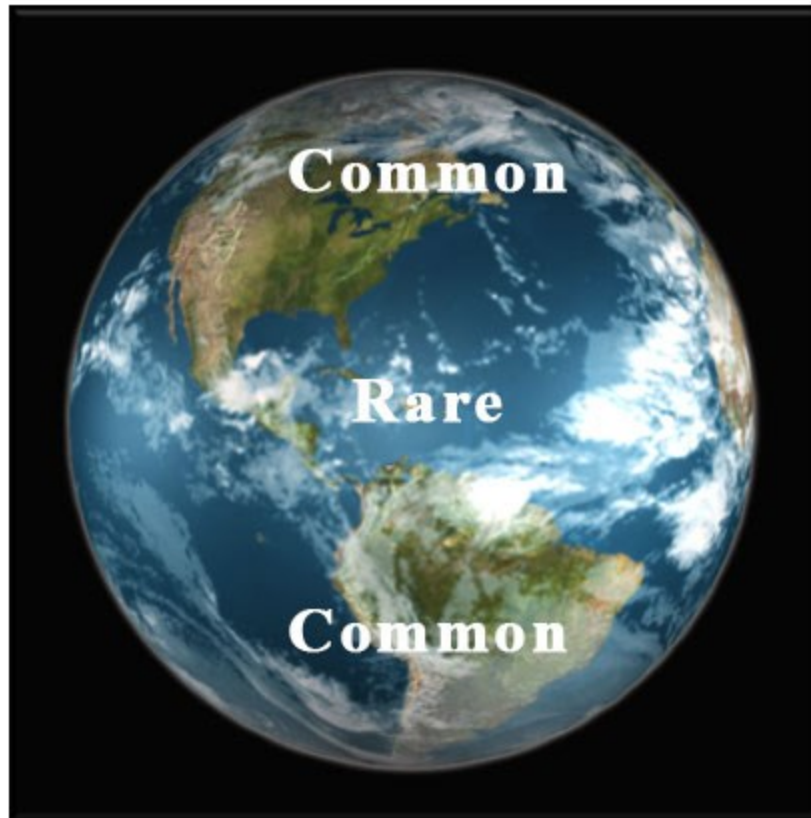
2) In the Australian study 2,256 community-dwelling women aged 70–92 years were randomly allocated to receive an annual oral dose of 500,000 IU vitamin D3 or placebo. Those on the supplement had a 15% increased rate of falls and a 26% increased rate of fractures.

The mechanism for these adverse turns of event is unknown, but supplementation may cause muscle weakness and nervous system imbalances that result in more falls and fractures. Scientific research has shown that vitamin D supplements can also increase "bad" LDL-cholesterol (heart disease), prostate cancer, immune system suppression, autoimmune diseases, gastrointestinal symptoms, kidney disease, and calcium kidney stones.

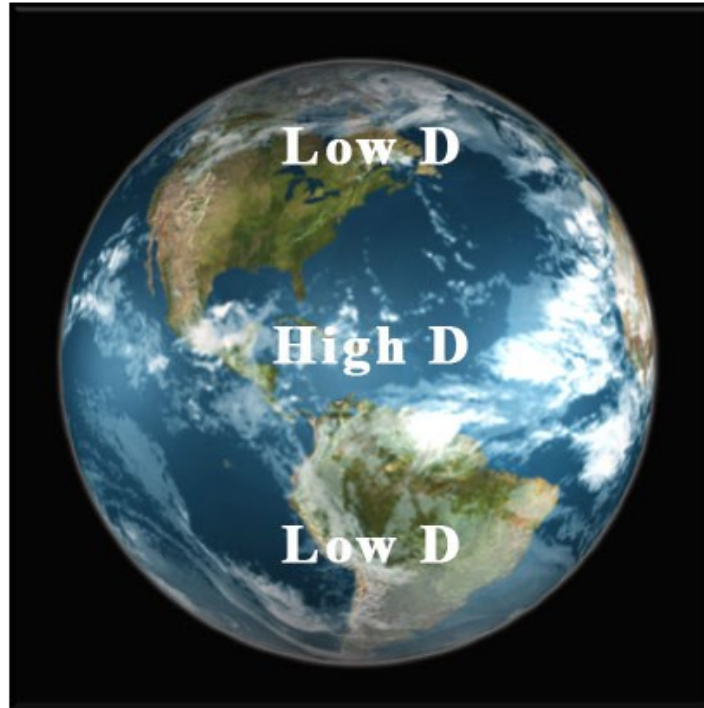
The Vitamin D Disease Myth

The medical and pharmaceutical industries' infatuation with vitamin D began when researchers correctly observed that the incidence of common chronic diseases, such as obesity, heart disease, type-2 diabetes, and multiple sclerosis was more common in populations of people living further from the equator and closer to the North and South Poles. Since even a school-aged child knows that the sun is hotter near the equator, the investigative spotlight looking for the cause of epidemic diseases became exposure to sunshine. Well, not exactly sunshine, but rather a metabolic product of sunshine: serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D in the blood. Rather than recommend the obvious—more sunshine—the remedy of traditional medicine was manufactured pharmaceuticals in the forms of oral and injectable vitamin D. In the US between 2002 and 2011, the [sales of vitamin D](#) supplements increased by more than 10 times, from \$42 million to \$605 million.

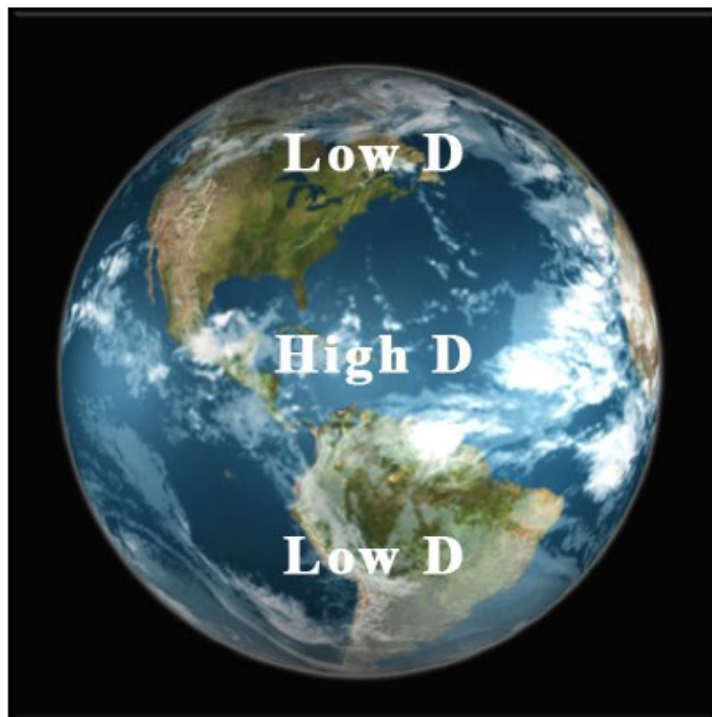
Geographic Distribution of Chronic Diseases (heart, diabetes, MS, etc.)



Geographic Distribution of Sunlight



Geographic Distribution of Sunlight



More than 100 years of laboratory and clinical research has established the causal relationship between the rich Western diet (heavy in animal foods and vegetable oils) and common chronic diseases. The geographic changes seen with vitamin D and, more accurately, the amount of sunshine, also conform to this incriminating research. The real reason for this correlation is that as populations migrate from the equator to more temperate climates, their food supply naturally changes.

The seasons of fall, winter, and spring are times of low food productivity by plants: Fruits from trees and bushes have ripened by summer's end; the wheat and corn crops have all been harvested by fall. To survive, people living farther from the equator have relied more on meat, poultry, fish, and dairy foods for calories. Concentration of human financial wealth in the northern and southern latitudes today has perpetuated this inequality in food distribution. Rich people consume richer foods. Poorer countries have traditionally been equatorial, and their foods have been beans, corn, potatoes, rice, and other starches.

The amount of sunshine is incidental and the blood levels of vitamin D are irrelevant. The food is the cause of the most common chronic diseases: obesity, heart disease, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, and cancer.

Chronic Disease Causes Low Vitamin D

Eating the Western diet causes serious common chronic diseases. In an effort to heal, the body responds with repair processes that include inflammation. One of the responses to this inflammation is the lowering of the serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D in the blood. Thus, low vitamin D in the blood is a [result of being ill](#), not the cause of sickness. This is the main reason studies using vitamin D supplements have consistently shown no benefits to patients with common chronic diseases. The metabolic imbalances created by administering this unnatural substance may actually be responsible for the increase in falls, fractures, and other damage. (Vitamin D is a hormone synthesized with the help of sunlight; it is not intended for oral intake or injection.)

Studies show, in addition to the healing processes, that even our basic [food choices](#) lead to inflammation. Consuming meat and other animal foods increase inflammation while grains and vegetables decrease inflammation. Thus, low vitamin D levels do not cause obesity, heart disease, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, and cancer, but rather result from the illnesses (and the very foods that caused these chronic conditions).

The epidemic of obesity has added to the epidemic of vitamin D deficiency. Because vitamin D is fat-soluble, excess body fat will pull vitamin D out of circulation, thus contributing to lower levels.

There Is Sunshine in Seattle

For excellent health, people must get sunshine; there is no substitute. The amount of sun required depends on one's skin pigmentation. For a light-skinned person, exposing the face, arms, and hands to five minutes of sun at noon two to three times a week at a latitude of Boston, MA in the spring, summer, or fall will cause the body to produce sufficient vitamin D to meet all of its needs. Asian-Indians may require three times as much exposure, and dark-skinned people may require 10 times as much exposure under the same sunlight conditions. During wintertime, this fat-soluble vitamin is stored for long periods of time, mainly in the liver and the fatty tissues.

Commonly people claim that they live in a part of the world where the sun does not shine. This is, of course, not true; there has always been enough sunshine to promote good health. Consider that people have lived in high northern and southern latitudes from Canada to New Zealand for more than 15,000 years, without taking any vitamin D supplements. And many of these people have had darker skin pigmentation than the typical very-white-skinned northern European Caucasian.

High-tech environmental [studies](#) on the penetration of sunlight all over the globe confirm the abundance of ultraviolet radiation available to produce vitamin D in people, even for those living in higher latitudes. Stop for a minute and consider that there is sufficient energy from the sun to grow huge rainforests, such as the Great Bear Rainforest, which extends from Vancouver, Canada to the border of Alaska. The energy is available, but people must take advantage of it.

Responding to a Low Vitamin D Level

I encourage people to avoid routine examinations of their blood for vitamin D levels (25-hydroxy vitamin D). There is nothing to be gained; adequate sunshine and eating well are "givens," regardless of blood test results. Various experts consider wide ranges of test values, between 12 and 100 ng/ml, sufficient. People with and without adequate sunshine exposure are commonly found to be deficient based on these blood results. Finally, and most importantly, treating abnormal blood tests with vitamin D supplements hurts people, at least by causing more fractures. Thus, there is no level of vitamin D discovered by a blood test that would cause me as a medical doctor to prescribe vitamin D supplements to one of my patients.

I recommend people expose themselves to as much sun as tolerated. That may mean to let their skin become slightly reddish at times. Skin damage, however, must be avoided because serious precancerous conditions (actinic keratosis), skin cancers, and accelerated aging come from over exposure.

Refocused physicians, dietitians, and other healthcare providers will resolve their clients' health problems by feeding them a [starch-based diet](#). Inflammatory foods will thus be avoided and chronic diseases will be improved or cured. And, as a side benefit, 25-hydroxyvitamin D may naturally rise to numbers considered to be "normal" by meddling medical and pharmaceutical businesses.

For more on Vitamin D read:

The [March 2011](#) McDougall Newsletter article: "Vitamin D: Values for Normal Are Exaggerated."

The [March 2010](#) McDougall Newsletter article: "Vitamin D Pills Are of Little or No Benefit and Some Harm. So What to Do Now?"

The [September 2007](#) McDougall Newsletter article: "Low Vitamin D: One Sign of Sunlight Deficiency."

Featured Recipes

More Simple McDougall Meal Ideas from Mary McDougall

Simple Corn Soup

This is wonderful as a simple lunch soup or part of a more elaborate meal plan. This may be served plain or with steamed vegetables added to the soup before serving.

Preparation Time: 1 minute

Cooking Time: 10 minutes

Servings: 2-4

1 16 ounce package frozen corn kernels, thawed

1 cup vegetable broth

Place the corn in a saucepan with 1/3 cup water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat slightly, cover and cook about 5 minutes, until corn is tender. Remove from heat and let cool slightly. Pour into a food processor and process until smooth. Gradually add the broth while processing and continue until soup is quite smooth. Return to saucepan, heat through and serve.

Variations: Broccoli florets, sliced red pepper, mushrooms, asparagus and pea pods are good choices to add to the soup as a surprise vegetable. Each bowl only requires 3-4 vegetables. Prepare the vegetables you plan to use before you start cooking the corn. Then while the corn is cooking, steam the vegetables over boiling water for 5 minutes. Add the steamed vegetables to the pureed soup and stir together well.

Creamy Beany Soup

I used to demo this soup in stores to show just how easy and delicious healthy food can be. The original name of the recipe was "Your Kids Will Love This Soup". And they always did, along with everyone else!!

Preparation Time: 5 minutes

Cooking Time: 10 minutes

Servings: 4

¼ cup finely chopped onion

¼ cup water

2 16 ounce cans nonfat refried beans

1 ¾ cups water

2 cups frozen corn kernels

1/3 cup mild salsa

½ teaspoon ground cumin

Place the water in a medium saucepan. Cook and stir until onion is very soft. Add remaining ingredients and mix well. Simmer until heated through, stirring occasionally.

Serve over whole grains or baked potatoes, or in a bowl by itself. Delicious! And Easy!!

In a Flash Black Bean Soup

Here is another simple recipe that I have been making for years. It is very easy to prepare, yet it tastes like you have been in the kitchen all day preparing this crowd-pleaser.

Preparation Time: 5 minutes

Cooking Time: 10 minutes

Servings: 4

3 15 ounce cans whole black beans (no oil or salt added) drained and rinsed
1 ¾ cups vegetable broth
1 cup fresh mild salsa
¼ teaspoon chili powder
several dashes of hot sauce to taste (optional)

Drain the beans and set 1 ¾ cups aside for later use. Place the remaining beans, broth and salsa in a blender jar and process until fairly smooth. Pour into a saucepan. Mash the reserved beans slightly with a fork and add to the pan along with the remaining ingredients. Cook gently over medium heat, stirring occasionally.

Serve with a loaf of hearty whole grain bread to dunk into the soup. Or serve as a topping over whole grains or baked potatoes.

Baked Yams or Sweet Potatoes

This is another simple starch that only takes a few minutes to prepare and can be used as the base for many delicious meals. As long as you are heating the oven to bake a yam or two, you might as well make more and save them for another meal. Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Preparation Time: 5 minutes

Cooking Time: 1 hour

Servings: variable.

Garnet Yams or Sweet Potatoes of your choice

Pierce the yams or sweet potatoes all over with a fork. Prepare baking pan by covering with aluminum foil and then a layer of parchment paper. (This makes clean-up much easier.) Lay the yams or sweet potatoes in a single layer on the baking tray. Bake until the tines of a fork slip in easily, usually about 1 hour. Let cool slightly, then eat as they are or use as a base for another delicious topping. Since they are slightly sweet they pair very well with broccoli and other cruciferous vegetables.

Guest Recipes from Michelle Robbins

Michelle Robbins, Michelle works as Executive Assistant for the McDougall's. She grew up in New Hampshire and has a BS in Environmental Conservation Studies as well as a BA in Paralegal Studies. Michelle moved to California in 2013 to pursue her dream of working in the field of plant-based nutrition. She is a certified yoga teacher and reiki master who enjoys creating her own whole-food, plant-based dishes on her site, PlantBasedEmporium.com. Her free time is spent thrifting, reading the latest nutrition literature, and petting bunnies at the local animal shelter.

Noah's Pie

Luckily, you can keep your exercise régime the same while enjoying this sweet pie because Noah's Pie is not only free of cholesterol but also virtually fat-free and just so happens to contain one of the healthiest vegetables.

Preparation Time: 20 minutes

Cooking Time: 30 minutes

Servings: 6

Ingredients:

4-5 sweet potatoes, cubed
1 large red onion, chopped
2 cups carrots, diced
4 cups water/homemade vegetable broth
2 cups red lentils
4 cloves garlic, minced
1 package frozen corn (10 ounces)
1 package frozen asparagus (10 ounces)
1 tbsp thyme
1 tsp marjoram
1 tsp oregano
1 tsp basil
1 tsp black pepper
1 tbsp paprika
1 tbsp parsley

Technique:

Boil sweet potatoes, until mashable. Steam the onions and carrots until mostly tender. Set aside. Meanwhile, bring 4 cups water or broth to a boil in a large pot, add lentils, and simmer lentils until soft, about 20 minutes. Mix into the lentils the corn, asparagus, carrots, onions, thyme, marjoram, oregano, basil, and black pepper. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Strain the sweet potatoes (reserving the water) and mash with a little of the boiling water. Stir the paprika and parsley into the mashed potatoes.

Fill the bottom of a large casserole dish with the lentil and vegetable mixture and top with the mashed sweet potatoes. Cook covered at 350°F for 25-30 minutes.

Serve with dry (without oil) roasted Brussels sprouts which cook in the same amount of time.

Mind Your Peas and Curry

Although you can survive on an all potato diet it is important to eat a varied diet. If spinach is your go-to leafy green, substitute the recipe's spinach with kale, collards, or Swiss chard to increase the diversity of your diet. Rather than using your standard apple variety, select a type of apple new to you.

Preparation Time: 15 minutes

Cooking Time: 30 minutes

Servings: 4-6

Ingredients:

3 cloves garlic, crushed and minced
1 large red onion, thinly sliced
1 small yellow onion, thinly sliced
1/2 tsp ground ginger
2 tsp brown mustard seeds
1 tbsp cilantro
2 tbsp curry powder
1/4 tsp black pepper
3 cups water/homemade vegetable broth
1 cup red lentils
2 cups snap peas, de-stringed and chopped
1 pound fresh organic spinach, chopped

1-2 organic apples, diced

Technique:

Crush and mince garlic and set aside. Cook onions in a dry, uncovered pot over medium heat until soft and fragrant, 10-15 minutes. Stir in minced garlic, ginger, mustard seeds, cilantro, curry powder, and black pepper. Add water or vegetable broth and lentils. Bring to a boil, then simmer over low heat until lentils tender, about 20 minutes. Remove pot from heat and stir in snap peas, spinach, and apple. Serve spooned over wild rice blend or brown basmati rice.

Corn, Beets, and Collards

This dish replaces the traditional Corned Beef and Cabbage. With spring in the air, exercise is on the mind and this tasty spread will help improve your athletic performance.

Preparation Time: 15 minutes

Cooking Time: 30 minutes

Servings: 4

Ingredients:

2 red onions, thinly sliced

1 yellow onion, thinly sliced

3 medium beets, cubed

1/2 tsp white pepper

1/2 tsp black pepper

1 tbsp apple cider vinegar

1 package frozen corn / 1 1/2 cups fresh corn

1 bunch organic collards, cut into ribbons

1 lemon, juiced

Technique:

Cook onion on high heat in a large skillet with a splash of water for 1-2 minutes covered. Lower heat and cook, covered, until onions begin to brown, about 15 minutes. Add beets, pepper, and apple cider vinegar. Cook on medium heat, covered, until beets are tender, about 20 minutes. Add corn, collards, and juice of one lemon. Cook a couple minutes longer until collards turn bright green.

Lose Your Mustache Mash

Preparation Time: 10 minutes

Cooking Time: 10 minutes

Servings: 2

Ingredients:

4 cups organic potatoes, peeled and cubed

7 whole cloves garlic, peeled

1 tbsp sage

½ tbsp rosemary

1 tsp thyme

Technique:

Boil potatoes and garlic until mashable. Place herbs in the bottom of a large bowl and top with freshly boiled potatoes and garlic. Mash everything together and add some of the boiling water to achieve a creamier mash.