

# Do I need a vitamin D test?

Vitamin D is an essential vitamin that helps our bodies absorb calcium, keeping our bones and muscles (including the heart!) strong. Most people get vitamin D through foods and sunshine.

Many Michigan residents tend to have lower vitamin D levels during winter months when we're more often indoors and the skies are cloudy. That doesn't mean that everyone needs a vitamin D blood test. Here are some things to know about vitamin D:



- 1 A vitamin D test may be ordered if you have a risk for:**
  - **Osteoporosis:** This disease makes your bones weak, so they are more likely to break.
  - A disease preventing your body from absorbing or using vitamin D, such as inflammatory bowel disease (Crohn's or ulcerative colitis), celiac disease, kidney disease, liver disease, pancreatitis and others. Milk allergies and vegans are also at risk.
  - You're on seizure medication
- 2 Talk to your doctor about vitamin D.** While low vitamin D levels can increase your risk of broken bones and other health issues, too much vitamin D can damage kidneys and other organs. Ask your doctor about your risks and natural ways to get vitamin D.
- 3 Improve your vitamin D levels naturally.** Lifestyle changes can help:
  - Stop smoking.
  - Maintain a healthy weight.
  - Be physically active.
  - Get outdoors when the sun is out (be sensible with sun exposure so you don't get burned!).
  - Eat the right foods (examples include eggs, orange juice, salmon, tuna and cheese).
  - Talk to your doctor about supplements.
- 4 Unnecessary tests cost money.** The vitamin D test is the fifth most popular lab test for older adults, leading to increased out of pocket costs for patients. Check your insurance plan to determine coverage and ask your doctor if it's necessary.

This health alert is brought to you by:



Sources: Choosing Wisely; American Society of Clinical Pathology, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The information should not be considered medical advice and could change without notice. Talk to your doctor about the right treatment plan for your health.