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. Michigan residents may have lower vitamin D levels during winter when more often indoors and skies are cloudy.

This health alert is brought to you by:

THE PHYSICIAN ALLIANCE

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.

Here are some things to know about vitamin D and testing:

1

Considerations for a vitamin D test:

- **Osteoporosis:** This disease makes bones weaken, increasing risks of break.
- Older adults with a history of fracture, lactating or pregnant women, and people with limited sun exposure
- A disease preventing your body from absorbing or using vitamin D, such as Crohn's or colitis, celiac, kidney or liver diseases, pancreatitis and others
- Milk allergies and vegans
- Medications preventing vitamin D absorption

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.

3

Improve your vitamin D levels naturally.
People ages up to 70 years need 600 IU/day, over 70 require 800 IU/day. Lifestyle changes can help:

- Stop smoking.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Be physically active.
- Get outdoors when the sun is out (practice safe sun exposure).
- Eat the right foods (examples include eggs, orange juice, salmon, tuna, cheese).
- Talk to your doctor about supplements.

4

Unnecessary tests cost money.
Vitamin D testing should be reserved for individuals at increased risk for deficiency or with certain health problems. Check your insurance plan for coverage and ask your doctor if it's necessary.