



Vitamin D and skin cancer

Information for patients from your Macmillan Skin Cancer Nurse

This leaflet outlines the importance of Vitamin D for patients who have been diagnosed with skin cancer. You have been given this leaflet because your healthcare professional has recommended you may need to consider taking a Vitamin D supplement.

What is Vitamin D and why do we need it?

Vitamin D is important to keep your bones healthy. There have also been suggestions that it is important in maintaining the health of other body systems, including mental health.

Where do we get Vitamin D?

- Vitamin D is found in **some foods** such as oily fish and breakfast cereals, but it is very difficult to get enough from your diet alone.
- The main source of Vitamin D is from **sunlight**. From late March to the end of September, most people will get enough Vitamin D from the sun. This is why those people who avoid sunlight, such as people who have been diagnosed with skin cancer, are more likely to have a Vitamin D deficiency.

What are the symptoms of Vitamin D deficiency?

Most people with Vitamin D deficiency will have no symptoms. However if your levels of Vitamin D are very low, you may have symptoms such as tiredness and pain in your muscles or bones.

What can I do to prevent Vitamin D deficiency?

Vitamin D deficiency is very common, especially in the winter months and in people with darker skin types who spend a lot of time indoors or covered up. We do not routinely test for Vitamin D levels using a blood test.

It is recommended by the government that all adults consider taking a supplement containing 10mcg of Vitamin D, especially during the autumn and winter months. This is especially important for people who avoid the sun, such as those diagnosed with skin cancer. Usually one tablet a day, all year round, will provide the recommended daily Vitamin D allowance.

Can I take Vitamin D with my normal medication?

Before you start taking Vitamin D supplements it is important to check with your GP or pharmacist to make sure that it will not affect any other medication that you currently take.

Further information

If you have any questions concerning Vitamin D and your condition, please speak to your Skin Cancer Clinical Nurse Specialist or your GP. More information on Vitamin D is available on the NHS web site. (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vitamins-and-minerals/vitamin-d/>)

This leaflet has been produced with and for patients.

Please let us know:

- If you have any accessibility needs; this includes needing a hearing loop or wanting someone to come with you to your appointment.
- If you need an interpreter.
- If you need this information in another format (such as Braille, audio, large print or Easy Read).

You can let us know this by:

- Visiting the Trust web site (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/ais>).
- Calling the number at the top of your appointment letter.
- Adding this information to the Patient Portal (<https://pp.ekhuft.nhs.uk/login>).
- Telling a member of staff at your next appointment.

Any complaints, comments, concerns or compliments, please speak to a member of your healthcare team. Or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service on 01227 783145 or email (ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net).

Patients should not bring large sums of money or valuables into hospital. Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property has been handed into Trust staff for safe-keeping.

Further patient information leaflets are available via the East Kent Hospitals' web site (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/patient-information>).

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