What is vitamin D and what does it do?

Vitamin D is a nutrient found in some foods that helps the body absorb calcium. Calcium is a mineral needed to build strong bones.
Vitamin D is also necessary for Muscles to stay strong and move right. It helps Nerves to carry messages between the brain and other body parts. Vitamin D helps the Immune System to fight off invading bacteria and viruses.

Where does Vitamin D come from?

The body makes vitamin D when the skin is directly exposed to the sun. That is why it is often called the "Sunshine Vitamin". Only 10 – 15 minutes of sunshine 3 times a week is enough to produce the right amount of Vitamin D. Because exposure to the sun is a risk for skin cancer, it is important to use sunscreen - even if you will only be in the sun for a short time.
People having dark colored skin and those only exposed to sunshine through a window will have less Vitamin D produced by their skin

What foods provide vitamin D?

Very few foods naturally have vitamin D. Many foods have Vitamin D added (Fortified). Vitamin D is found in the foods listed on the back of this sheet. The major groups include:

- Dairy Products – milk, cheese, butter and cream

- Fatty fish such as salmon, tuna, and mackerel are some of the best sources.

- Fortified breakfast cereal, and to some brands of orange juice, yogurt, and soy beverages

How much vitamin D is needed each day?

Adults need 600 international units (IU) daily

How is the level of Vitamin D tested?
A simple blood test can tell the level of Vitamin D

What happens if you do not get enough vitamin D?

Too little vitamin D leads to osteoporosis (thinning of bones) or bone pain and muscle weakness.

What happens if I get too much Vitamin D?

Too much vitamin D can make the intestines absorb too much calcium. High levels of calcium can then cause calcium deposits, confusion, kidney stones, nausea, vomiting and constipation. You could also have weakness, poor appetite and weight loss.

Too much Vitamin D is caused by taking too much Vitamin D supplement. Excessive sun exposure does not cause Vitamin D poisoning. It is very difficult to ever get too much vitamin D from the foods you eat.

Food	IUs per serving*
Cod liver oil, 1 tablespoon	1,360
Salmon (sockeye), cooked, 3 ounces	447
Mackerel, cooked, 3 ounces	388
Tuna fish, canned in water, drained, 3 ounces	154
Milk, nonfat, reduced fat, and whole, vitamin D-fortified, 1 cup	115-124
Orange juice fortified with vitamin D, 1 cup (*check product labels, as amount of added vitamin D varies)	100
Yogurt, fortified with 20% of the Daily Value (DV) for vitamin D, 6 ounces (more heavily fortified yogurts provide more)	80
Margarine, fortified, 1 tablespoon	60
Liver, beef, cooked, 3.5 ounces	49
Sardines, canned in oil, drained, 2 sardines	46
Egg, 1 large (vitamin D is found in yolk)	41
Ready-to-eat cereal, fortified with 10% of the DV for vitamin D, 0.75-1 cup (more heavily fortified cereals might provide more of the DV)	40
Cheese, Swiss, 1 ounce	6