

Vitamin D (Ergocalciferol D2; Cholecalciferol D3[®])

How does this medicine work?

Vitamin D is actually a hormone that is necessary for many cells in the body to work properly. Vitamin D is important for bone health and also helps with neuromuscular and immune function and reduction of inflammation. Low levels of vitamin D have been associated with an increased risk for many conditions including: infections; adult cancers; chronic pain; blood clots, high blood pressure, diabetes and auto-immune diseases.

Why would my child have low levels?

Vitamin D is obtained from sun exposure or diet. In Minnesota the sun is only strong enough in the summer to produce vitamin D. Most diets and multivitamins do not contain enough vitamin D for most people. Those with dark skin, who are over weight, who smoke or are elderly, are more likely to have a low vitamin D level.

How is vitamin D measured?

The only way to know if vitamin D level is low is a blood test drawn from a vein or catheter (it cannot be done by finger poke). The name of the test is 25-hydroxy-vitamin D. The normal level is 32-80 ng/mL. Talk to your health care provider if you have questions about this test.

How should I give it?

Vitamin D can only be given by mouth on a daily, weekly or monthly schedule. It is best absorbed by the body when taken with food. If vitamin D levels are low, higher doses will be given for 1 - 2 months to produce a normal level prior to starting a maintenance dose.

Recommended Maintenance Daily Doses of Vitamin D3 (Cholecalciferol)

Infant: 200 units
Toddler: 400 units
Child: 800 units
Teen and adult: 2000 units
Obese Teen and Obese Adult: 5000 units

What are the side effects?

There are no known side effects. Vitamin D will only cause side effects with intentional overdosing for weeks. It is impossible to develop vitamin D toxicity from sun exposure. Excessive sun exposure will increase the risk of skin cancer such as melanoma. Sunscreens will decrease this risk but will also reduce vitamin D production from the skin; so oral vitamin D will be needed.

What should I do if a dose is missed?

If one dose is missed, go back to your normal dosing schedule.

When should I call the clinic?

Call your doctor if you have questions about taking Vitamin D.

What else do I need to know?

If your child is taking vitamin D for rickets (a bone disease), your provider will also prescribe calcium supplements. This is done to prevent a lowering of the blood calcium level that could result in muscle spasms. Calcium levels should be checked periodically after starting treatment as recommended by your provider.

If you would like more information about Vitamin D, see information from the Office of Dietary Supplements at the National Institutes of Health at the website:
http://dietary-supplements.info.nih.gov/factsheets/vitamin_d.asp

Questions?

This sheet is not specific to your child but provides general information. If you have any questions, please call your clinic or pharmacy.

For more reading material about this and other health topics, please call or visit the Family Resource Center library, or visit our Web site: www.childrensmn.org.

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