

# How much vitamin D is too much? Understanding how supplements might cause toxicity

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In severe cases, it can be fatal, although fatalities are rare (Source: Pexels)

Vitamin D, often hailed as the “sunshine vitamin,” is essential for a multitude of bodily functions, from bone health to immune system support. We primarily get vitamin D through sun exposure, and most people prioritise achieving adequate levels. However, basking in the sun’s rays or taking supplements can have unintended consequences. While uncommon, exceeding recommended **vitamin D intake** can lead to a condition known as vitamin D toxicity.

Dr L. Sudarshan Reddy, senior consultant physician, Yashoda Hospitals, Hyderabad, explained vitamin D toxicity, also known as hypervitaminosis D, occurs when there’s an excessive accumulation of vitamin D in the body.

“In severe cases, it can be fatal, although fatalities are rare and typically associated with extremely high doses of vitamin D supplements over a prolonged period. It’s important to seek medical attention if you suspect vitamin D toxicity,” Dr Reddy said in an interaction with [indianexpress.com](https://indianexpress.com).

## What are the signs and symptoms of vitamin D toxicity?

According to Dr Reddy, the signs and symptoms of **vitamin D** toxicity can include:

1. Nausea and vomiting
2. Weakness and fatigue
3. Loss of appetite
4. Excessive thirst and frequent urination
5. Elevated blood calcium levels (hypercalcemia), which can lead to:
6. Kidney stones
7. Muscle weakness
8. Confusion
9. Abdominal pain
10. Bone pain and fractures
11. Irregular heartbeat
12. High blood pressure

If you experience any of these symptoms of vitamin D toxicity, especially after taking vitamin D supplements, it's important to consult a healthcare professional for evaluation and appropriate management.

## **How do you know you need (or don't need) vitamin D supplements?**

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Determining if you need **vitamin D supplements** depends on various factors such as your age, diet, lifestyle, and sun exposure. Here are some considerations, according to Dr Reddy:

- 1. Sun Exposure:** If you live in a region with limited sunlight, have darker skin, or spend most of your time indoors, you may be at higher risk of vitamin D deficiency.
- 2. Diet:** If you have a diet low in foods rich in vitamin D, such as fatty fish, fortified dairy products, and fortified cereals, you may need supplements.
- 3. Health Conditions:** Certain health conditions, such as osteoporosis, inflammatory bowel disease, or kidney disease, can affect your body's ability to absorb vitamin D and may require supplementation.
- 4. Age:** Older adults tend to have reduced skin synthesis of vitamin D and may need supplements, especially if they have limited sun exposure.
- 5. Blood Tests:** Your healthcare provider can perform a blood test to measure your vitamin D levels. If you are deficient, they may recommend supplements.

Always consult with a healthcare professional before starting any new supplements, warned Dr Reddy, as they can provide personalized recommendations based on your individual needs and health status.

## What happens if you're taking supplements though you don't need them?

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Taking supplements without a prescription or specific need can potentially be harmful for several reasons, said Dr Reddy:

- 1. Overdosing:** Excessive intake of certain vitamins and minerals, including vitamin D, can lead to toxicity and adverse health effects.
- 2. Interactions:** Some supplements can interact with medications or other supplements you may be taking, leading to unintended consequences or adverse reactions.
- 3. Nutrient Imbalance:** Taking high doses of one nutrient without considering others can disrupt the balance of nutrients in your body and potentially lead to deficiencies or imbalances.
- 4. Misdiagnosis:** Symptoms that seem like they could be related to a nutrient deficiency may actually be caused by an underlying medical condition. Taking supplements without proper diagnosis and treatment can delay appropriate care.

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