

FRESH CONVERSATIONS

Iowa Department of Public Health

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The "sunshine" vitamin & the connection with depression

According to the CDC, 41% of adults in the U.S. are vitamin D deficient.

Sunshine - there's just something about it that makes you feel better. Sunshine has a positive effect on most of us. Aside from the mental boost, sunshine also provides us an essential vitamin - vitamin D. Vitamin D, also known as the "sunshine" vitamin, is an essential vitamin that your body needs to thrive and survive. But vitamin D can be difficult to get in proper amounts through your diet and sun exposure. Like all essential nutrients, when your body does not get enough, it doesn't function properly. Vitamin D has many functions in your body including maintaining good bone health and also brain and heart health. Low vitamin D levels can cause your bones to become brittle or thin. A vitamin D deficiency also increases your risk of falling and may cause difficulty walking, bone pain, and muscle weakness.

Source: who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/depression

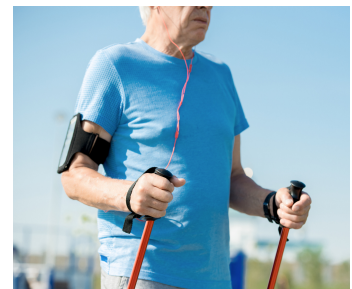
But wait, there's more. Studies have also shown that lower levels of vitamin D may increase your risk of depression. Depression is a common disease affecting more than 264 million people, worldwide. So which comes first? The chicken or the egg? It is still unknown whether vitamin D deficiency may cause depression or if depression may lower your vitamin D levels. The science is still out, but studies have shown the benefits of adequate vitamin D and an improvement in depression symptoms.

Growing herbs in a garden or in pots is a great way to get outside and get some vitamin D! Find out more on page 3...



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Where do I find vitamin D?



Page 3

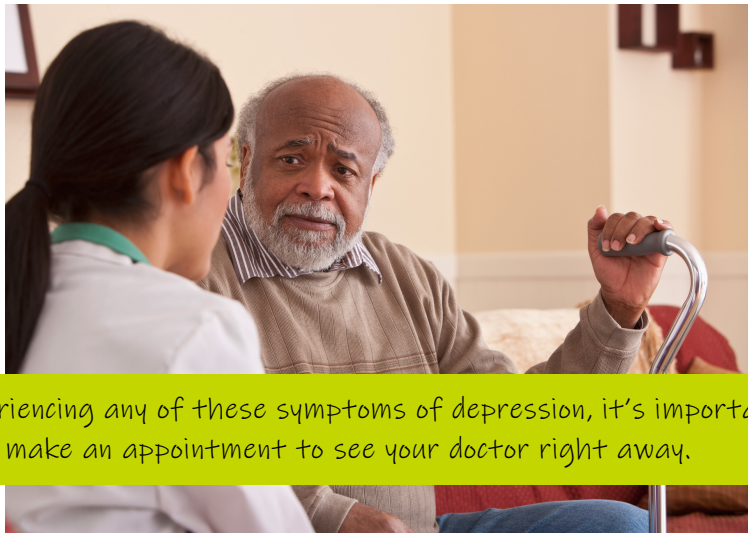
Get outside and be active!

Depression

Depression can happen at any age. It is more than just feeling sad or blue. It is a common but serious mood condition. Depression is a real illness; it is not a sign of a person's weakness or a character flaw. It is also not a normal part of aging.

Signs & Symptoms:

- Loss of interest in activities you once enjoyed
- Lethargy
- Excessive weight gain or weight loss
- Insomnia
- Problems concentrating
- Overwhelming feelings of sadness & hopelessness
- Anxiety
- Loss of appetite



If you are experiencing any of these symptoms of depression, it's important that you make an appointment to see your doctor right away.

What can I do to lower my risk of depression?

- Try to prepare for major changes in life, such as retirement or moving from your home.
- Stay in touch with family.
- Let someone know when you feel sad.
- Be physically active (find something you enjoy!)
- Eat a balanced diet.

Source: [healthline.com/health/depression-and-vitamin-d#symptoms](https://www.healthline.com/health/depression-and-vitamin-d#symptoms)
Source: [nia.nih.gov/health/depression-and-older-adults](https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/depression-and-older-adults)

Be Active. Eat Healthy!

This month, I will take action by...

Where do I find vitamin D?

How Much Do I Need?

Older adults 70 years and above have higher vitamin D needs than younger adults. They are the same for both men and women.

Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA) for vitamin D:
Ages 1-70: 600 IU, Age 71+: 800 IU

**#1 Sunlight
is your best
source!**

Food Source	Serving Size	Amount Per Serving
Fatty Fish (Salmon)	3 ounces	566 IU
Fortified Orange Juice	8 ounces	137 IU
Fortified Milk	8 ounces	124 IU
Egg Yolk	1 egg	41 IU
Fortified Cereal	1 cup	40 IU

What are some things I can do to optimize my vitamin D intakes?

- Read food labels for vitamin D content.
- Breakfast is a good opportunity for high vitamin D foods, from eggs to cereal.
- Include fish at least 2 days of the week in menu planning.
- Vitamin D is a fat soluble vitamin. Eat fat containing foods with vitamin D to optimize the absorption.

Source: [ncoa.org/economic-security/benefits/food-and-nutrition/senior-nutrition/](https://www.ncoa.org/economic-security/benefits/food-and-nutrition/senior-nutrition/)
Source: ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/VitaminD-HealthProfessional/
Source: [nnewsnetwork.mayoclinic.org/discussion/mayo-clinic-q-and-a-getting-enough-vitamin-d/](https://www.nnewsnetwork.mayoclinic.org/discussion/mayo-clinic-q-and-a-getting-enough-vitamin-d/)



Fresh Conversations is developed by: Iowa Dept. of Public Health idph.iowa.gov/inn
Iowa Dept. on Aging iowaaging.gov

How do I know if I'm vitamin D deficient?

It's important to know how much vitamin D is circulating in your body. This is done with a simple blood test. Ask your doctor if you'd like for your vitamin D to be checked. Medicare may cover this, if your physician deems medically necessary. Spring is a good time to measure your vitamin D status. This is because most people spend the winter indoors or covered in more clothing. In addition the sun rays are not very strong in northern states. If your blood level is considered low, your doctor may prescribe a supplement. It's best not to guess the amount. Be sure to consult with your doctor before starting a supplement. It is important to remember that a vitamin D deficiency is not reversed overnight. It could take weeks to months for levels to normalize.

The amount of sun exposure needed for adequate vitamin D production is uncertain, but most estimate no more than 15 minutes a day, between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., three times a week.



Be active outside!

One of the best things about being active outdoors is getting to enjoy nature! The fresh clean air you breathe in, the warm sun on your skin, and the beautiful colors our eyes take in. Seeing the sun shining, the green grass, the flowers blooming, it just puts you in a good mood! Spending some time outside walking in the sunshine can be a double mood enhancer. Both sunlight exposure and physical activity cause your brain to release feel-good hormones. Even better, the sunlight exposure helps your body make vitamin D. That's triple the reason to get moving!

Growing Herbs

Plants also enjoy sunshine! Try your hand at gardening to spend some time outside in the sun with your plants. Herbs can be planted in small pots or also in a typical garden for more room to spread out!

Herb	Growing Suggestions & Tips
Basil	Likes sunny but sheltered spots. Dark green leaves have sweet flavor with mild pungency.
Mint	Has a tendency to spread invasively in outdoor gardens. Roots easily from stem cuttings.
Oregano	Can propagate from cuttings or division of the mature plant.
Parsley	Keep trimmed so the plant does not develop flowers.
Rosemary	A tender perennial, bring inside before the first frost.



Did you know that participants can buy seeds and edible plants with SNAP benefits? For every \$1 spent on seeds, home gardeners can grow an average of \$25 worth of produce.

Herbs should be picked close to the time you plan to use them. If you grow herbs in your own garden, the best time to harvest herbs is in the morning after the dew is off. Fresh herbs can be stored in an open or perforated plastic bag in your refrigerator crisper drawer for 2-3 days. Fresh herbs can also be dried and frozen.

Source: blogs.extension.iastate.edu/spendsmart/tag/basil/

Information & resources for seniors with home & family questions
ISU AnswerLine 1-800-262-3804



Salmon Patties



Serves 6, 1 patty per serving, \$0.52 per serving

Ingredients:

- 1 can (14.75 ounces) salmon, drained
- 1 egg
- 1 slice of whole wheat bread, shredded or 5 saltine crackers, crushed
- 3 green onions (including the green stems) or 1/3 cup white onion (chopped fine)
- 1 medium clove garlic, minced or 1/8 teaspoon garlic powder
- Dash ground black pepper
- 1/2 tsp seasoning (paprika, chili powder, or dill weed)
- 2 tsp oil (canola or vegetable)

Instructions:

1. Remove any large bones and skin from salmon. Break salmon into chunks with a fork.
2. Break egg into a large bowl. Whisk with a fork. Add salmon, bread or crackers, onion, garlic, pepper, and additional seasoning. Mix gently.
3. Form into 6 patties about 1/2 inch thick.
4. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Place patties in the skillet. Leave the skillet uncovered. Cook for 3 minutes. Turn over patties with a spatula. Cook the other side 3-4 minutes to a temperature of 145 F. Serve immediately.

Cooking Tip: Move the patties as little as possible so they don't break apart.
Freezing Tip: Patties can be frozen for 2-3 months before or after cooking.

Nutrition Information (per serving): 110 calories, 5 g fat, 3 g carbohydrates, 14 g protein, 1 g fiber, 230 mg sodium, 312 IU vitamin D (39% daily value)

This recipe is provided by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. For more resources like this, visit the Spend Smart. Eat Smart. website at <http://spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu>. Spend Smart. Eat Smart. is a registered trademark of Iowa State University.



Word Scramble

1. eniushsn _____
2. iinoftfroatic _____
3. penmtplesu _____
4. enob tahehl _____
5. hsrbe _____
6. dirneseops _____
7. oanslm _____
8. tfa subloel _____

Answer key:
 1. sunshine
 2. fortification
 3. supplement
 4. bone health
 5. herbs
 6. depression
 7. salmon
 8. fat soluble